

# Internationalism

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CONTENTS: STATE CAPITALISM \* ECONOMIC CRISIS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS \* WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT IN SPAIN  
SCOTTISH STRIKE WAVE \* FASCISM AND ANTI-FASCISM

## B I L A N

Bulletin théorique mensuel de  
Fraction de Gauche du P. C.

**A bas toutes les patries :  
la fasciste, la démocratique, la soviétique  
Vive la lutte du prolétariat mondial  
pour la révolution dans tous les pays**

### L'écrasement du prolétariat espagnol

Deux critères existent pour la compréhension des événements  
formes opposées sur lesquelles s'effectue la concentration de la classe  
ainsi seulement que nous pourrions analyser les dernières hécatombes  
des milliers de prolétaires de la péninsule ibérique, fusillés mitraillés, éliminés par  
la « République des travailleurs espagnols ».

Ou bien la République, les libertés démocratiques, ne sont qu'un puissant diversif  
sif que l'ennemi soulève quand il lui est impossible d'employer la violence et la ter  
reur pour écraser le prolétariat. Ou bien, la République et les libertés démocratiques  
représentent un moindre mal et même une condition favorable à la marche victo  
rieuse du prolétariat qui aurait pour devoir de les appuyer en vue de favoriser son  
attaque ultérieure pour sa délivrance des chaînes du capitalisme.

Le terrible carnage de ces derniers jours en Espagne dev  
combine du « dosage », suivant laquelle la République  
ouvrière » à défendre, mais sous « certaines conditions »  
où elle n'est pas ce qu'elle est, ou à la c  
peut pas devenir, ou, enfin  
a, elle se dispose à  
petit jeu de  
pré-

### Party, Trade-Union, or Workers' Power—Which!

But there were more organisations on the field, and there is no identity of interests among th  
ganisations. Each one is struggling against all others for supremacy, for the sole rule over the worker  
sharing of power by a number of organisations does not do away with the struggle between them. A  
all organisations are forced to co-exist, but this is only a postponement of the final reckoning. On  
must control. At the same time that the anarchists were proceeding from "one success to the other"  
position was continually being undermined and weakened. The U.N.T.'s assertion that it would not  
to other organisations, or work against them, was in reality only a plea not to be attacked by others—  
nition of its own weakness. Being engaged in capitalist policy with its allies of the People's Front  
the broad masses with the possibility of choosing their favourite from among the bourgeois element  
one who offered the most had the best chance. Moscow Fascism came into vogue even in Catalonia  
the masses saw in the support of Moscow the strength necessary for doing away with Franco and th  
Moscow and its People's Front Government meant international capitalist support. Moscow ga  
influence, for the broad masses of Spain were still in favour of the continuation of the exploitation  
And they were strengthened in this attitude by the fact that the anarchists did nothing to clar  
situation, that is, to show that help from Moscow meant nothing more than the right for a capitalist  
pleases a few imperialist powers, even though it may disappoint others. The anarchists became propa  
for the Moscow brand of Fascism, the servants of those capitalist interests which oppose the present  
plans in Spain. The revolution became a playground of imperialist rivals. The masses had to die  
knowing for whom or for what. The whole affair ceased to be the affair of the workers. And now it  
ceased to be the affair of the U.N.T. The war may be ended at any time by a compromise agreement  
the imperialist powers. It may be ended with a defeat or with a success of Franco. Franco may dr  
and Germany and turn to England and France. Or the former countries may cease to pay further a  
to Franco. The situation in Spain might be decisively altered by the war brewing in the Far East.  
is still a number of possibilities in addition to the most likely one, that is, victory for Franco-Fascis  
whatever happens, unless the workers throw up new barricades against the Loyalists also, unless the  
really attack capitalism, then whatever may be the outcome of the struggle in Spain it will have  
meaning to the working class, which will still be exploited and suppressed. A change in the military s  
in Spain might force Moscow-Fascism once more to don the revolutionary garb. But from the vi  
of the interests of the Spanish workers, as well as of the workers of the world, there is no difference  
Franco-Fascism and Moscow-Fascism, however much difference there may be between Franco and  
The barricades, if again erected, should not be torn down. The revolutionary watchword for Spain  
with the Fascists and also down with the Loyalists." However futile, in view of the present  
might be the attempt to fight for Communism, still this is the only course for workers  
the sense of futility than the morbid energy that expends itself on false roads. We  
truth, or reason at all cost, even at the cost of futility."

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Our cover pictures Juan Negrin, the leader of the Spanish popular front, and Francisco Franco, the fascist leader, at the time of Spain's civil war. The popular front and fascism were the proletariat's twin executioners. Above them are excerpts from Bilan, the review of the Italian left, and from International Council Correspondance, the review of the Council Communists. The Italian left and the Council Communists stood practically alone in their condemnation of both fascism and the popular front.

\*\*\*\*\*

- p. 27 -- Note, line 1, "meusouge" should read "mensonge"
- p. 33 -- Note, line 7, "Castoriades" should read "Castoriadis"
- p. 35 -- Note, line 2, "W.W.I" should read "W.W.II"
- p. 51 -- line 40, "labor union" should read "labor unions"
- p. 53 -- Note, line 1, should read "p. 64"
- p. 56 -- The paragraph that begins "But our purpose is to organize...." is part of the quotation taken from the document of the "Autonomous Workers Groups" which begins on p. 55.
- p. 58 -- Note, line 2, "lucha reinvindicativa" should read "lucha reivindicativa"
- p. 63 -- line 41, "at" should read "and"
- p. 67 -- line 10, "France" should read "Franco"
- p. 67 -- line 17, "efforts" should be followed by "of"
- p. 69 -- "position" should read "positions"

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### FROM 3 TO THE CRISIS!\*

The crisis is here. No one any longer tries to deny it. The bourgeoisie no longer resorts to trickery: its own appointed economists, who yesterday exulted in the "disappearance of crises," who announced an "unlimited expansion," who only wanted to see in the monetary crisis the manipulations of speculators playing at Euro-dollars the way one plays Monopoly, these same economists and experts have today changed their tune and do not hesitate to contradict what they previously said by announcing the worst difficulties for the years ahead.

The bourgeoisie and their lackeys are pragmatic men: while the economic situation was good they sang hymns to the "goddess of growth," using the crumbs that they distributed to try to benumb the vigilance and combativity of the workers, and passing off those strikes that did take place as the caprice of spoiled children; but when the economic situation turned bad and there could no longer even be a question of crumbs, they did not hesitate to shout "god is dead," to strike up a funeral dirge and to enlist the proletariat in wearing mourning. This is what we are seeing today: after having tried for many years to deny the crisis, now the newspapers speak of nothing else. And if all these articles reflect a real anxiety within the ruling class, they also have as their function to attempt to sow discord by an inflation of words, to scare the workers so as to impose the austerity measures which are proliferating. The speeches on the "necessary sacrifices" and "national solidarity," which are today already legion in the mouths of different governments, have only begun. For the workers they mean: unemployment, increased exploitation and reduced consumption. Moreover, the bourgeoisie leaves no stone unturned in an attempt to justify this period of "thin pickings" (oil crisis, energy crisis, raw materials crisis.)

#### The Bankruptcy of the "Modernists"

If the bourgeoisie, with the goal of disorienting the workers, is today particularly overbearing on the subject of the crisis, there are some others whom the crisis has made as silent as the grave. We no longer hear the prattle of the "revolutionary theorists" of the "consumer society," of "capitalism without crises," of "the world unification of capital," of "the embourgeoisement of the proletariat" -- all those marcusians, situationists and other "realists" of the periods of expansion who, because

\* This article first appeared in Revolution Internationale #7. We print it here with some minor changes.



the post-war reconstruction gave a transitory breathing space to capital and momentarily anaesthetized the workers, thought it was okay to throw marxism overboard, either in its own name or in the name of modernism or the "critique of daily life."

In truth it must be said that one of the members of this illustrious brotherhood has broken his silence of late: Castoriadis-Chaulieu-Cardan-Coudray, the theorist of "the dynamic of capitalism" (Socialisme ou Barbarie #12) who has undertaken the publication of his complete works. Socialisme ou Barbarie put forward a whole theory "showing" that capitalism had succeeded in overcoming its economic contradictions and that the fundamental contradiction of society became the division between rulers and ruled.

We must also mention the English disciples of Cardan, London Solidarity, who in their January 1974 number show to what blind stupidity these conceptions can lead:

The example of England has little significance for modern capitalism. There is a chronic balance of payments problem; there is a problem of under-capitalisation (sic) and a backward administration. To these problems there has now been added the problem of the rise in oil prices.... But these specific difficulties of British capitalism must not be extrapolated, as they are by some revolutionaries, in order to signify an uncontrollable economic crisis of the kind foreseen by Marx, affecting the system in its totality.

May '68 was a swan song for all these charlatans. The lack of depth attained by the crisis in that period and the role played by the students in unleashing the events led some people to say that the proletariat didn't need a crisis in order to engage in its decisive struggle, and led others to cry at the top of their voice that they were right to predict that the "marginal strata" would replace the working class in putting the system in question. All were in agreement in mocking the "remains of the old ultra-leftism, [for whom] at least a major economic crisis was necessary ... [who] subordinated any revolutionary movement to its return, and saw nothing coming" (Internationale Situationniste #12) and in exposing to contempt "the revolutionaries who only too often based their hopes on the perspective -- presented as the touchstone of marxism -- of an inevitable catastrophe [and who] seemed to be no more than visionary spirits imprisoned in their anachronistic dreams" (Organiser le courant marxiste révolutionnaire the text of a group which came out of S ou B.)



Now their voices are stilled. The "harmonious dynamic" of capitalism becomes more and more chaotic; in place of world unification, the division into nation-states more and more asserts itself as the counterpart of world anarchy; consumption, which was blamed for everything bad in society, is becoming restricted; and the proletariat that had already been buried has returned to trouble the sleep of the bourgeoisie. The theorists of Socialisme ou Barbarie have been converted into sociologists, the Situationists into publishers, and Marcuse has returned to his precious studies. Against all these ideologues, who have above all expressed a revolt without issue with respect to the dominant counter-revolution and who could not link up with the past of the working class, the present events attest that marxism is indeed the only perspective which permits one to understand the world -- the indispensable condition for transforming it.

#### A "Marxist" Interpretation of the Crisis

Besides these pseudo-revolutionaries now silent, there have arisen "marxists" for whom the class struggle is the principle reason for the crisis.\* Denying any market problem for capitalism in the manner of J.B. Say, they persist in asserting that it is excessive rise in wages and therefore in consumption due to the struggle of the workers which is at the basis of the present difficulties of capital. Those who heap tons of abuse on the "pitiful readers of Marx" would do well to think about what Marx wrote on this question:

The ultimate reason for all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as opposed to the drive of capitalist production to develop the productive forces as though only the absolute consuming power of society constituted their limit.  
(Marx, Capital, Volume III, Moscow 1962, pp.472-473)

It is therefore the relative underconsumption of the working class with respect to the total mass of value which it creates, an underconsumption made necessary by the laws of capitalist production, which is at the basis of crises\*\* and not overconsumption -- much to the chagrin

\*Readers in the U.S. will be most familiar with the "theories" of Mario Tronti which have been disseminated by the revue Telos.

\*\*It goes without saying that we do not share the thesis of the Stalinists according to which it would be sufficient to increase wages for expansion to start again. To sum up, such a conception would mean

-- that the working class constitutes a real



of Lutte de Classe, Lotta Continua or Potero Operaio.

Revolutionaries can be mistaken. What is less admissable is that they should make use of a marxism, the first letter of which they don't seem to know, or that they should give evidence of even less clarity than a bourgeois politician. What is particularly inadmissable is that they should take up the very conceptions that the bourgeoisie is more and more trying to develop in order to convince the workers that it is they who bear the responsibility for the crisis and that their "good behavior" is the condition for a return to prosperity.

It is evident that already a large number of workers are impervious to this type of propaganda (the British miners for example) but it is no less true that important factions of the working class are still sufficiently subject to bourgeois ideology to find behind these arguments a justification for their hesitation and a pretext for not engaging in battle.

#### Lamentations in the Face of the Crisis

Since the crisis has become a bitter reality, a concert of lamentations has begun to ascend from the different bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata of society. Some are "horrorified" at the increase in the misery of the masses (particularly those of the Third World) that the crisis will provoke. Others proclaim that "democracy is in danger" and explain that, like the crisis of 1929, the present crisis will ineluctably lead to fascism. What in

\*\* (con 't. from p. 3)

market for the disposal of the whole of capitalist production;

-- that capital would no longer realize surplus value since the workers wages must be sufficiently high in order to purchase the totality of capitalist production -- with the exception of that part utilized as constant capital in order to make this production possible. The formula for capitalist production would no longer be  $C+V+SV$ , but  $C+V$ ;  
-- that the proletariat would no longer be an exploited class and that there would no longer be any classes.

Such a system is everything that one wants save for the fact that capitalism and the "realist" politicians who propose these recipes to resolve the crisis are demagogues.

The insoluble contradiction of capitalism consists in the fact that the producers create more value than they are "permitted" to consume by the economic laws of capitalism:



fact most upsets these democrats is the perspective of disorders and upheavals that the crisis will provoke and which risk altering or threatening their privileges and their miserable quietude. Not being able -- and for good reason -- to envisage the revolutionary alternative towards which events can lead, they can only see the other side of the coin: the counter-revolution that their small brains baptize with the catch-all name of "fascism."

But, coming from obvious defenders of the old world, this clamour does not surprise us. What is astonishing is to see an authentic revolutionary group like the Fomento Obrero Revolucionario, which in the worst periods of counter-revolution has stuck to class positions, abruptly forget the precepts of marxism and be led to sing the same tune as all these others by proclaiming its distress in the face of the crisis. This is what they wrote in Alarma\* #19:

We assert ... that we do not wish for this type of crisis (of overproduction) because we do not consider it indispensable or even favorable for the revolution. Its primary effect would be to hide what is basic, the crisis of capitalism as a system of production, as a civilization. The problem and the most urgent demands would then be to win back jobs under any conditions, putting off into the distant future the other economic and political demands which are directly opposed to the system -- demands that today one can and must defend as immediate. Thirdly ... the great extension of misery that a crisis of overproduction would lead to would permit the big political and trade union organizations to easily impose themselves on the starving masses and to canalize them towards state capitalism. At the moment that industrial activity began again we would find ourselves with a proletariat much more submissive to capital than today, more alienated and much farther from revolutionary consciousness.

Finally, we say that revolutionary consciousness can only be engendered by an activity of the proletariat which opposes socialist solutions to each of the aspects of capitalism as it

\*\* (con't. from page 4)

the value created by labor power is greater than the value of the commodity labor power; the difference between these two values -- the surplus value -- in order to be transformed into new capital must therefore be sold outside the sphere of wage-labor (in "extra-capitalist" markets which are progressively destroyed by the expansion of capital itself.)

\*Alarma, write to: Nicole Espagnol, 125 rue Caulaincourt, 75018 Paris France



normally functions, treating it as a decayed system of associating people, here and now reactionary and pernicious -- all of which is much more feasible without a crisis of overproduction than with one. The bankruptcy of the system of civilization based on capital and wage-labor offers sufficient grounds and concrete problems to stir up rebellion against it. The revolutionaries who do not see this are indeed stupid.

Let us say at first that whether or not one wishes it, the crisis comes with the ineluctability of natural disasters. That said, what are we to think of the idea that it is not "indispensable or even favorable for the revolution"?

If one is a marxist, one must admit that "in every society the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class." This is not only due to the fact that the ruling class disposes of all of the instruments of oppression and mystification but also to the fact that while this class is capable of mastering the economic laws of its mode of production, this mode of production appears as the only one possible. This does not mean that even in periods of prosperity for the system, that this mode of production does not engender an enormous amount of suffering within the exploited class which impels it to wish for a better life and to struggle to obtain it. But the intensity of this struggle on the one hand, and the goals that the exploited class sets for itself on the other, are conditioned by the general health of the system. When the system is capable of granting some crumbs, this fact, joined with the whole arsenal of propaganda and pressure that control of the state confers, permits the ruling class:

- to still the combativity of the exploited class;
- to keep it in the illusion that its lot can be improved;
- to limit its ambitions to a reform of the existing system and not to revolution.

It is only when society finds itself in a crisis situation such that it can no longer grant a single crumb, but must take back those that it had previously granted, such that it can only present to the masses a perspective of greater and greater misery instead of "happy days" -- it is only then that the mystifications that it has maintained within the revolutionary class begin to lose their hold, at the same time as this class is led to react violently.

The history of all past revolutions attest to the fact that a



revolution never occurs without the society being in an acute crisis situation which plunges the masses into unbearable conditions of existence: that is true of the bourgeois revolutions (1789, 1848) as well as the proletarian upheavals (1871, 1917-23.) In each of these cases the masses had undergone an intolerable aggravation of their condition, either directly because of an economic crisis or because of a war and its train of privations.

It is correct to say that capitalism is today "a decayed system of associating people, here and now reactionary and pernicious." With the First World War capitalism entered its historical crisis, its decadent phase, which "offers sufficient grounds and concrete problems to stir up rebellion against it." The question that one must then ask is why the proletariat has not yet overthrown it. If the grounds for this overthrow of capitalism are not lacking, what was lacking until now was the possibility. For 60 years the proletarian revolution has been the order of the day, but that does not mean that it is possible at every moment. It is certainly not possible in periods of reconstruction like the one which ended around 1965, where capital -- thanks to the war time destruction -- could momentarily get back on its feet permitting at the same time an improvement in the lives of the workers.

Throughout this period the decadence of the system has followed its course, which is expressed at the level of the superstructures by a certain number of manifestations of rejection of the present society: the student movement, beatniks, hippies, drugs, pop music, etc., which sometimes affect important factions of the young petty-bourgeoisie and workers. But these movements, by accentuating the cleavage between the new and the old generation of workers and by blending the composite aspirations of the different strata of the petty bourgeoisie with the workers own struggle, have had as their principle effect to further obscure the consciousness of the proletarians.

In these years, during the period of capitalism as it "normally functions," that is to say during reconstruction, the "normal situation" of the working class was one of the greatest atomization, first at the level of nations, then at the level of factories and job categories and finally at the individual level, with each worker hoping in a more or less confused way to be able to "make it alone;" to buy his car, his t.v. set, to pay for his little vacations, on credit if need be. These latter were so many crumbs that capitalism could promise or



concede only because it found itself in a momentary period of expansion. But through the hopes that it stimulated, capitalism effectively linked the workers to the system.

The crisis therefore appears as the necessary condition to break these links, to destroy these false hopes as well as the job, sectoral and national barriers which divide workers. To take only these latter, how can one foresee an international revolution, that is to say, a relatively simultaneous insurrection of the proletariat of the principle capitalist metropolises, without there existing in these countries new and similar material conditions which impel this proletariat to act? Such a world phenomenon, occurring simultaneously, effecting the material bases of society and destroying routine and illusions, can be nothing other than the crisis.

The comrades of the Fomento Obrero Revolucionario do not wish for a crisis of overproduction because its "primary effect would be to hide what is basic, the crisis of capitalism as a system of production, as a civilization." We cannot understand how this crisis, which (and these comrades don't contradict us) effects the whole of society down to its roots, could "hide what is basic" while it is an integral part of what is basic -- "the crisis of capitalism as a system of production."

Since Marx, it has seemed apparent that "all the contradictions of bourgeois production explode collectively in the general crises of the world market,"\*these crises, therefore, only being the spectacular manifestations of the fundamental contradictions of the system and not "superfluous epiphenomena" or simple "incidents along the way." The entrance of capitalism into its phase of decadence has not altered this fact, but on the contrary, accentuated it: if the crises of the 19th century were finally resolved

\* Marx, Material Pour L' "Economie" (1861-1865), La Pleiade, tome 2, p. 497. What we have here is not a casual assertion of Marx, but an idea that is found throughout his writings: "The contradictions inherent in the movement of capitalist society express themselves upon the practical bourgeois most strikingly in the changes in the periodic cycle, through which modern industry runs, and whose crowning point is the universal crisis." (Afterword To The Second German Edition of Volume I of Capital, Moscow 1961, p. 20) "From time to time the conflict of antagonistic agencies finds vent in crises. The crises are always but momentary and forcible solutions of the existing contradictions. They are violent eruptions which for a time restore the disturbed equilibrium." (Capital Volume III, Moscow 1962, p. 244)



in a peaceful fashion, by the conquest of new markets, the crises of this century -- less frequent, but infinitely more violent -- have no other capitalist outcome but world war. To only want to see these crises as a "transitory disorder of the system" (Alarma\_#19), is to resolutely turn one's back on marxism.

In fact, it is only through a crisis of this type, where "all the contradictions of bourgeois production explode collectively" that the proletariat can find the strength and the consciousness not only to overturn the power of the bourgeoisie but also to discern the basic economic measures which will lead society to communism. It is the crisis of overproduction which shows the workers the fundamental causes of the historical crisis of the system: production is blocked for reasons having to do with the social relations of production (the necessity to sell and the lack of solvent outlets) while "technically" there is no problem and while real needs weigh more and more heavily. The crisis shows the proletariat the point at which it must strike first: commodity relations.

For all these reasons, THE CRISIS IS NOT AN OBSTACLE ON THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION BUT ON THE CONTRARY ITS INDISPENSABLE CONDITION. In this sense, not only do revolutionaries not fear the crisis but rather they await it with all their hearts, because without it no revolution is possible.

It is evident that we do not deny the dangers that the crisis will hold for humanity. More than a half century of the decadence of capitalism have taught us what price humanity pays for the unbridling of the contradictions of the system: fascism, intensification of the tendency to state capitalism, imperialist butcheries. We also know that whatever its outcome -- Third World War or proletarian revolution -- the crisis will thrust onto the proletariat, as well as onto the already starving masses of the Third World, an increase in misery: it is in the millions that the specialized agencies figure the number of dead that famines will cause.

To those who think that like the crisis of 1929, the present crisis will lead us to fascism, to war (or to state capitalism) we answer that the present situation is no longer the same as in 1929. It is true that unemployment can be a powerful factor in the demoralization and dislocation of the proletariat: in certain circumstances, the workers, afraid of losing their jobs, turn their backs on any defensive struggle and those who have already lost their jobs are ready to make any compromises to get them back again. But in other circumstances -- and



there are many historical examples, beginning with the June days of 1848 in Paris -- unemployment forces the workers, who have nothing to lose, to directly confront the bourgeoisie on the political plane, to go into the streets.

The element that inclines the balance in favor of one or the other of these two types of reactions is the general course of the class struggle at the point at which the onset of the crisis occurs. In 1929, the world proletariat had just undergone the greatest defeat in its history: the revolutionary wave of 1917-23 had been drowned in blood everywhere or led astray thanks to the complicity of the "workers" parties. But what weighed most heavily on the combativity and the consciousness of the workers was the false victory of the Russian revolution which had engendered that monstrosity called "socialism in one country," and which had turned a large part of the workers away from any idea of revolution and transformed the others into a masse de manoeuvre for the bourgeois political operations of the parties which supported this "socialism." In these conditions, the crisis and unemployment were a supplementary factor in the demoralization of the workers who, when they were not entirely disgusted with politics, fearfully took refuge under the wings of the social-democratic, Stalinist and even fascist parties. Fascism and anti-fascism then became the two tits of the counter-revolution. They made the workers swallow the hard pill of the Second World War.

The present situation is completely different. The course of the class struggle is not descendant but ascendant. The new generations of workers have not undergone the defeats of earlier generations. The dislocation of the "socialist" bloc, the workers insurrections in the countries of this bloc have dealt a severe blow to the "communist" parties and to the mystifications that they convey. Fascism and anti-fascism are used up and are far from knowing the success of yesteryear. Finally, the first manifestations of the crisis are provoking a general awakening of the world proletariat -- this giant which was only sleeping: what is striking in the workers' struggles of the past few years is that they have spared hardly any country, not even those which were famous for their "social peace" (Germany, the Scandinavian countries, etc.) In fact, it is to slight the capacities of the working class to think that in all circumstances "the great extension of misery that a crisis of overproduction would lead to would permit the big political and trade union organizations to easily



impose themselves on the starving masses and to canalize them towards state capitalism."

That said, it is necessary to recognize that, although extremely encouraging, the present symptoms do not guarantee the certain victory of the proletariat in the confrontations which are coming. The eventuality of a new defeat is not a completely absurd hypothesis, but taking account of present circumstances, we can say that:

1) Even if it is finally defeated, the proletariat will not fail to react as it did in 1929: the bourgeois solution to the crisis -- imperialist war -- will only finally be imposed after the crushing of the workers' resistance, which leads us to affirm that the immediate perspective is not one of world war, but one of proletarian revolution;

2) If this time the proletariat is not equal to its historical tasks and must yield to the bourgeoisie, that could lead to an irreparable catastrophe for the human race. The workers who are not prepared to engage in the necessary struggle against the exploitative society, or who have neither the lucidity nor the courage to rid themselves of the mystifications that the ruling class heaps on them must beware: they risk paying for their deficiency with a holocaust next to which 1939-45 will be a Sunday school picnic, putting off for several centuries any possibility of revolution or even destroying humanity altogether!

This is what revolutionaries must say to their class and not to demoralize them in advance with lamentations in the face of the crisis or attempt to tell them stories like the English Trotskyists who pretend that the crisis is an invention of the government, or the French Trotskyists who write:

If we want to prevent the economic difficulties of the capitalist system from denoting misery and unemployment for us, then we must undertake a struggle for a genuine sliding scale of wages and the distribution of work between all with guarantees of wages in case of unemployment -- with the bosses bearing the costs of the crisis... (Lutte Ouvriere #279)

In spite of their "revolutionary" language, these people,



who speak of a "genuine sliding scale of wages" instead of the abolition of wage-labor and of making the bosses bear the costs of the crisis instead of eliminating the bosses, in no way distinguish themselves from those who propose a "left administration" of the crisis. All of them with their recipes and their magical potions have no other function (even if it is unconscious and hidden behind tactical considerations) than that of attempting to divert the proletariat from its revolutionary struggle. Far from expressing the interests of the proletariat, they become the spokesmen for strata who are linked in an indissoluble way to capital, at the head of which one finds the petty bourgeoisie.

It is this petty bourgeoisie also which today inspires the cries of distress before the calamities that the crisis will provoke: increased misery, famine. This despair is the despair of a social stratum which -- whatever the outcome of the crisis -- has no future, for whom the crisis can mean nothing else than the abandonment of its shabby privileges.

Revolutionaries are certainly aware of the heightened exploitation, the misery and repression that the crisis will represent for the workers; the additional horrors that will burst upon the masses of the Third World. It is not with a light heart that we make these statements, but:

- because we are secreted by a class with a revolutionary task
- because our fate is the fate of our class and the fate of the totality of humanity

we resist any sentimentality and say:

-- that however catastrophic is the aggravation of the condition of the exploited masses, that it will only represent one more drop in a sea of catastrophes which extend over 60 years of capitalist decadence (imperialist butcheries, massacres of civilian populations, cataclysmic destruction, famines, police terror) and in a sea of capitalist exploitation extending over several centuries, with its slavery, wage or not (Workhouses, the treatment of Blacks), its constant instability and the total dehumanization of life -- killing even the desires -- that it imposes on the workers when it does not reduce them to hunger;

-- that this sea is itself part of an ocean of suffering, of capitalist, feudal, despotic or slave exploitation, of the subjection of men to their economic needs, of their powerlessness against nature and because of which the aggravation of misery which threatens us



loses all its debilitating and distressing power when we understand that it can be the end of misery, "the end of the kingdom of necessity," "the end of human pre-history;"

-- that today only the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie (those who are linked to capital) are afraid, because the crisis can mean the end of their privileges;

-- that the proletarians find in crises the cohesion which is indispensable to their revolutionary role, that cohesion that the prosperity of capital -- as false and misleading as it is -- always succeeds in breaking by distributing crumbs and illusions about the possibility of "making it alone;"

-- that the proletariat "has only its chains to lose" and a world to gain;

-- that the additional suffering that the proletariat will endure is indispensable so that it may break with the old world, so that reality itself breaks the ties that bind it to the old world;

-- that in these circumstances the crisis appears as a liberating wind sweeping away the fetters which prevent men from becoming masters of their destiny;

-- and that finally, today one cannot be a truly conscious revolutionary and not ardently await the coming of the crisis.

HERE'S TO THE CRISIS!

HERE'S TO THE REVOLUTION!

C.G.



## THE SCOTTISH STRIKE WAVE

Preface:

This report continues the analysis of the crisis and the class struggle in Britain taken up in articles in nos. 1 and 2 of World Revolution. In these articles\* we traced the deepening of the crisis of British capital in the form of spiralling inflation, bankruptcies and declining competitiveness on the world market. Faced with this disastrous situation the bourgeoisie has resorted to numerous stratagems to try to shore up the tottering economy including two general elections in a year, the three day week, nationalism, and the Social Contract which pledges cooperation between the Labour Party and the unions in preventing strikes. Until recently the working class in Britain has remained largely quiet in the face of this barrage of mystification: the widespread militancy of 1972 underwent a certain lull in 1973 and the first part of 1974. But as we wrote in WR2: "some recent strikes have shown signs of heralding a new wave of industrial struggle. In the steel industry, on the oil refineries and the docks, and most recently in the auto industry, there have been large unofficial strikes, and in the strikes at Ford (Halewood and Dagenham) workers were openly asserting their opposition to the social contract." The subsequent explosion of strikes in Scotland have been an even more striking sign that the class struggle in Britain is once again on an ascendant path.

The Strikes and the Reaction of the Bourgeoisie

In Scotland this October there was a wave of strikes of workers in key industries on a scale unknown since the end of the First World War. The strikes were centered in West Central Scotland, particularly in Glasgow, where there was almost a general strike. Strikes by sewage workers, dustmen, bus and tube drivers, teachers, plus workers at the Hoover and Rolls Royce factories brought the city to a virtual standstill, while the strike by lorry\*\* drivers had profound effects on the whole of the Scottish economy. A total of 35,000 workers were actually on strike, with another 100,000 laid off as a result.

All these strikes were unofficial. Their crippling intensity sent TGWU boss Jack Jones scurrying up to Scotland to try to get the workers to return to work in order to honour the "Social Contract." A number of less important local officials expressed violent opposition to the strikes and had heated arguments with the strike committees. The trade unions and the Labour Party were extremely concerned that this strike wave occurred so soon after a Labour victory in the elections. Especially since the Labour government has the specific role of trying to ensure social peace by cooperating with the unions in smothering the class struggle. The right wing factions of the bourgeoisie, such as the Tories and the Confederation of British Industry did not hesitate to use the strikes as a stick with which to beat the Labour Party. According to them the Labour Government

\* The Crisis in Britain, WR no. 1, also in Workers Truth, nos. 7,8, 9, 10. World Capitalism in Crisis and Nationalism and Class Struggle, WR, no. 2.

\*\* Truck



can only encourage "extremism" in the trade unions and cannot really guarantee the Social Contract. Labour is naturally anxious to show that it can do so, that it is truly the party of national unity. The Labour minister of Education, Reg Prentice, accused those striking against threshold agreements of "cheating"; both the Department of Employment and the AEUW condemned the wage increases granted to Rolls Royce workers; while others have warned against "wage inflation" being provoked by such strikes.

Another tactic of the Labour Party was to blame the Scottish Nationalists for encouraging the strikes, by their continual talk of separation from the English economy and by their holding out a prospect of unprecedented boom just as soon as Scotland gains control of the oil-bonanza now being developed on the North Coast. Even though these developments have brought slight temporary improvements in the Scottish economy the strikers never posed the question of separation from Britain in order to get their hands on the oil profits. Their demand was for more money now -- everywhere the strikers came up with similar or identical demands, for £10 - £15 a week wage increases, and these demands are clearly an attempt by the working class as a whole to defend its living standards against the effects of the economic crisis. This strike was not a "scottish" phenomenon but a moment in the development of the international class struggle. For its part, the Scottish Nationalist Party hysterically called for the troops to be sent in to break the strikes, which is good evidence both for the working class basis of the strikes,\* and for the capitalist nature of the SNP.

These various factions of the bourgeoisie -- Unions, Labour, Tories, S.N.P. -- perhaps recognized more quickly than the workers the political importance of these strikes. The strikes are a definite challenge to the Social Contract and show that the working class is resisting the attempts of the capitalists to make it pay for the crisis. They are evidence of how little control the official union bureaucrats have over the movement of the class. In spite of all their limitations these strikes contained signs of a genuine autonomy in the workers' struggles -- autonomous from unions and shop stewards, bourgeois parties of left and right, and in open pursuit of class interests -- which is the chief nightmare of the bourgeoisie in this period. This movement not only fatally weakens the attempts of the bourgeoisie to "guide" the direction of the crisis (by increased exploitation, and by mobilization for war) but also contains within it the seeds of the communist movement of the proletariat; the liquidation of the class rule of the bourgeoisie.

### The Organization of the Struggle

This movement is still very uneven, as can be gauged by the nature of the Scottish strike wave and by the forms of organization that it generated. Thus if we examine the composition of the various strike committees involved, there are important divergences in the degree of autonomy achieved in the struggle. At Rolls Royce, a factory

\* Compare the S.N.P.'s attitude to that of the Ulster Loyalist parties who put themselves at the head of the Ulster strike last May. That strike was called by the Protestant "Ulster Workers Council" to protest against a reorganization of the Ulster Constitution granting certain rights to the Catholic minority. Although it brought the Ulster economy to a halt, its reactionary aims won it the fervant



where the trade unions have been well entrenched for many years, the strike committee emerged automatically from the plant's shop-steward committee. Apart from some angry scenes among the workers at the end of the strike, with some wanting to go back and others wanting to stay out, it was a largely passive strike with the workers being called out by the stewards and sent home to await the outcome of the stewards negotiations. At Hoover the story was similar, though here the shop stewards strike committee put into operation the formal protocol of trade union "democracy" with mass meetings and so on. All these methods are typical of "unofficial" trade unionist strikes which the stewards are past masters at leading and controlling.

In other strikes, however, there was more independent action by the workers. The bus and tube drivers clashed with their stewards over the latter's acceptance of the management's pay offer. Although the teachers elected an unofficial Action Committee of delegates from various schools and often expressed strong anti-union sentiments in their meetings, the Education Institute of Scotland succeeded in undermining the Action Committee by taking up its demand for a £15 a week increase for all teachers.

But the strike which showed the most autonomy and militancy was that of the lorry drivers. Since they had the advantages of not being encumbered by shop stewards, they were immediately able to form their own strike committee from scratch, which emerged from the developing movement as depot after depot came out and as the normally isolated drivers sought to unify their struggle. This strike committee took responsibility for a number of tasks, including that of deciding which supplies should be delivered throughout Scotland (e.g., medical supplies were a special case). As the strike progressed different workers became involved with it and consequently no permanent "leaders" arose and no one was put forward as a recognizable "spokesman" for press or T.V. Since it is a time honored method of the media to recuperate militant leaders by isolating them from the rank and file and making them "celebrities," the drivers' precautions against this happening were well-advised. The lorry drivers also had some violent physical clashes with union bureaucrats, and they were in the forefront of the Scottish strikers in trying to spread the strike to English drivers.

### The Limitations of the Struggle

Despite these signs of autonomy, and despite the devastating effect of the strikes, the most significant aspect of the strikes, is really in what they failed to achieve. Although the wage demands of the strikes tended to be taken up by all the sectors involved, there was no attempt to link the strikes together in any concrete sense -- no joint demonstrations, no centralization of strike committees, even though all the strikes were going on at the same time in the same area. Similarly there was no movement to consciously generalize the struggle to other sectors of the working class.

Some dilettantes will argue that this is because the workers cannot in the decadent era of capitalism unite around wage demands, that

support of all loyalist factions. See Workers Voice 12, "Will the Real Workers Councils Please Stand Up."



mass struggles only break out when there are no consciously formulated demands but only a will to struggle. But such arguments ignore the whole history of mass strikes and uprisings which, providing certain preconditions are fulfilled, do break out around specific wage demands but which go far beyond such demands into an open confrontation with the state. Those preconditions are basically the depth and extent to which the capitalist crisis reaches all levels of society. When the crisis reaches a point where the condition of the working class is becoming unbearable, when the ruling class has reached the end of its tether, when the workers can clearly see the bankruptcy of the system -- then the "day to day struggle" of the class takes on a different quality and propels the working class into generalized struggles which challenge the very fabric of the social order.

While world capitalism as a whole is steadily moving towards that point, the unfolding of the crisis, particularly in the advanced countries which have more mechanisms for decelerating its effects, has still some way to go. The workers are aware of the need to struggle but are not yet fully aware that nothing can be gained by the old methods -- by sectional struggles, by delegating leadership to the stewards, etc. It is becoming apparent that so-called "victories" won by this or that sector of the class are at best temporary, or will be won back by speed-up, attacks on other sectors, etc. But as long as some leeway for sectional struggles remains, the illusions of sectionalism will remain, and workers will not recognize the necessity of taking the struggle further.

#### The Role of the Shop Stewards

In this situation, the stewards are able to dominate or control the majority of strikes. Because they are far closer to the rank and file than the higher union bureaucrats, because their own interests are so closely identified with the sectional "interests" of "their" workers, they are able to put themselves forward as real, militant defenders of the workers interests. But in fact the stewards remain appendages of the unions and thus of capitalism; their overall interests are indissolubly linked to the survival of capital, however much stewards themselves may be in favour of its reorganization. The stewards no less than the union bureaucrats have a stake in preventing strikes from getting out of their control, spreading autonomously to all sectors of the class, or leading the working class to violent confrontations with the state. The stewards cannot go beyond sectional interests in a period when the working class doesn't have sectional interests. Today the only real interests of the class are its autonomous unification, its destruction of the state and of capital. The stewards not only cannot be instruments in this unification, they can only oppose it, and only seek to divide and fragment the working class by perpetuating sectional illusions.

In Scotland the movement for unification was ultimately limited by the uneven tempo of the crisis. But this cannot be seen in a mechanistic way. In the last few years mass struggles have cut across sectional lines, even at times when the effects of the crisis were not as severe as they are today, -- e.g., France '68, Italy and Argentina '69, and so on. The role of the stewards and other "rank and file" capitalist agents must be seen as a contributing factor to the failure of the strikes to unite. There is no possibility of



steward dominated strike committees uniting in an independent mass struggle; any formal unified bodies that might be set up by stewards in a more extreme situation would have the aim of controlling, diverting or destroying the struggle. Only by organizing outside of and against all union and shop steward structures can the workers deepen and unify their struggle.

### The Task of Revolutionaries

The main task of revolutionaries is to intervene in such manifestations of the class struggle as occurred in Scotland and to point out their most radical tendencies, i.e., all those tendencies which lead towards the autonomy and unity of the class. This is not because the workers can only gain "victories" and improvements in their living standards by struggling in a self-organized manner. On the contrary, communists must point out the impossibility of any real improvements under capitalism in crisis. The only gain that can be made by the proletariat as a whole in the contemporary class struggle is the development of the awareness of its own historic interests; which can only come through struggle, through the relentless fight by the proletariat in defending itself in the face of the crisis. During struggle the workers develop an understanding of the role of the unions, the left capitalist parties, and the State; during struggle they come up against the historic bankruptcy of capitalism, the impossibility of reforms; and can thereby develop the consciousness and capacity for self-organization which gives them the confidence to take power and to reorganize world society. Revolutionaries must advocate the maximum extension and independence of struggles because it is these aspects of the struggle which form an indispensable part of the proletariats' movement towards the communist revolution.

G.D. Ward  
World Revolution



## A Contribution on the Question of State Capitalism

### I

Understanding reality is essential to being able to change it. Without understanding the implications of state capitalism, revolutionaries have been and may continue to be inadequate to the task of defining the objective conditions of capitalism's existence today. Without grasping the objective roots for the necessity of revolution in a system in decay, proletarian revolution simply becomes a far-off utopia. Does state capitalism mean a new life for the system? Is it a "new system" that has solved capitalism's contradictions and crises? Is it in fundamental contradiction with "private" capitalism?

The answers to these questions are fundamental to the elaboration of a revolutionary program today. This article does not attempt to be an exhaustive economic or theoretical proof of the existence of state capitalism. It is an over-view of certain elements of a state capitalist analysis, a polemical contribution to an understanding of the criteria with which we deal with the adaptations within the capitalist system since the first world war. The deficiencies in the article, the fact that a certain scholarly detail has been sacrificed to present a synthesis of the many aspects of the question, will be supplemented and corrected by further work and discussion on the different aspects of this question today.

There are many groups and tendencies today which try to explain the nature of state capitalism or at least use the word state capitalism in their analyses. Stalinism and "official" Trotskyism no longer have absolute hegemony on the left, considering Russia as a "socialist state" or (an even more pernicious mystification) a "degenerated workers' state." Unfortunately the debate on Russia or any specific economy has often clouded the issue of state capitalism as a general tendency in all capitalist countries and it is by no means clear what is meant by "state capitalism" as used by anyone from International Socialism to Bordiga to Mattick. Some think it represents a more "rational" organization of capital, others that it has resolved the fundamental contradictions of the law of value and still others see it as a "new system" engendering a "new class" in history.

Our analysis differs fundamentally from this line of reasoning. The trend towards statification\* of the economy in the modern world is the expression of the permanent crisis of capitalism since 1914. It is an adaptation within the system in order to survive in a period where the economic motor of capitalism has run out of historical possibilities. When capitalism's contradictions can only tear the world apart in inevitable inter-imperialist rivalries and war, state capitalism is the expression of the tendency towards autarky, the permanent war economy, national concentration for the protection of national capital. This tendency is stronger in periods of open crisis and mobilization for war; it can take different ideological forms and proceed at different speeds depending on the economic and political position of an individual country but it subsists as the general expression of capitalist decadence in the absence of a proletarian solution to the crisis of capitalism.

\* By statification we mean the absorption of civil society by the state, the fusion of big capital and the state through devices such as nationalization and central planning.



To get a sense of the historical specificity of state capitalism in the last 50 years, the different periods in capitalist development must be understood. The state has always played a role in capitalist development; indeed, the state is a fundamental feature of all class societies. But comparing statification today to the construction of pyramids in ancient Egypt or the Inca Empire is merely an intellectual, a-historical game.

In the period of primitive accumulation when capitalism was developing within feudal society, the centralized royal state often acted as a "protection" or spur to further development. State aid was certainly necessary at capitalism's beginnings but as the means of production developed and conflicted with previously defined social relations the state was taken over by the progressive bourgeoisie to eliminate the fetters of feudal society and to allow for the assimilation of the bourgeoisie into the ruling classes. During the nineteenth century, the apogee of capitalism's development, the state was primarily a regulator of the economy whose blind economic laws then functioned to permit growth and progress. The state intervened to even out the process, to check abuses and dislocations or to give a protected start in countries where capitalism was late in developing and where the bourgeoisie was weak (the necessary political unification and administrative centralization in Germany and Italy for example). In this period the cyclical crises of capitalism were reabsorbed by the extension of the world market, the penetration of new areas of the globe. The economic laws of the system, because they had not reached the limits of the world market in relation to productive capacity, could function with relatively little direct interference or intervention by the state.

But in the period of decadence due to the relative saturation of markets, the permanent crisis of the system imposed certain changes in the organizational structure of capitalism. In this period there is no economic solution to the crisis for the system as a whole; the only temporary "solution" for any national capital is to try to compete more effectively on the world market by taking over the markets of rival powers. In this period the struggle among the different imperialist powers leads to continual warfare of a limited or generalized nature and the permanent war economy so that each national capital can defend itself against the others. Because there are no purely economic solutions to these difficulties, the blind laws of capitalism cannot be allowed to function freely and the bourgeoisie tries to get around the consequences of the system's economic laws through the intervention of the state: state subsidies, taking over unprofitable sectors of the economy through nationalization, regulation of raw materials, national planning, monetary manoeuvres, etc. There is only the economic policy of the state to provide a temporary means of survival to a system in crisis. To defend itself and to force a favorable redistribution of markets, national capital falls back on the state, not as an aid to development but as a crutch.

The tendency towards state capitalism did not appear as a gradual, intrinsic "rationalization" of the system. Unlike monopoly capital, which gradually grew out of laissez-faire competition without any particular planning or over-all design, state capitalist measures grew abruptly out of the situation during World War I as a conscious, economic policy of the national governments. State capitalism was not a direct outgrowth of the freely developed previous economic trends but



was a breaking down of the tendency towards international cartels and trusts, a movement towards national concentration and unity.

Historically the first appearance of a developed tendency towards state capitalism came as capitalist crisis found direct expression in the war of 1914. This was not an accident; as the only logical capitalist outcome to permanent crisis is war, the development of state capitalism and world conflict have maintained their fundamental inter-relation for the past 50 years. Germany during the first World War offers the clearest example of state capitalist measures in that period. Every factory was mobilized for the war effort and functioned under the auspices of state decisions. Raw materials were distributed by the state to the sectors thought to be the most essential to the co-ordinated efforts of German national capital. War needs brought forth rationing in consumption as well as in production.

In England too the work force was mobilized by the state not only through conscription but through control over each worker's contribution to the total effort (limiting the mobility of labor, internal passports, allocating manpower resources, etc.) The complete capitulation of the Second International and the union movement (an inevitable result of years of reformism and political degeneration) led to their incorporation into the state apparatus and facilitated the militarization of the labor force. France, like Germany and England had its "economic commissions" to integrate the unions into state planning bodies along with employers for the "union sacrée" for imperialist slaughter.

At the first Congress of the Communist International in 1919, revolutionary socialists felt it essential to mark the changes in the capitalist system brought about by the first World War, and the new period of the decadence of the system.

The catastrophe of the imperialist war has completely swept away all the conquests of trade union and parliamentary struggles. For this war itself was just as much a product of the internal tendencies of capitalism as were those economic agreements and parliamentary compromises which the war buried in blood and muck.

Finance capital, which plunged mankind into the abyss of war, itself underwent a catastrophic change in the course of this war . . . During the decades preceding the war, free competition, as the regulator of production and distribution, had already been thrust aside in the main fields of economic life by the system of trusts and monopolies; during the course of the war the regulating-directing role was torn from the hands of these economic groups and transferred directly into the hands of military-state power. The distribution of raw materials, the utilization of Baku or Rumanian oil, Donbas coal, Ukrainian wheat, the fate of German locomotives, freight cars and automobiles, the rationing of relief for starving Europe -- all these fundamental questions of the world's economic life are not being regulated by free competition, nor by associations of national and international trusts and consortiums, but by the direct application of military force, for the sake of its continued preservation. If the complete subjection of the state power to the power of finance capital had led mankind into the imperialist slaughter, then through this slaughter finance capital has succeeded in completely militarizing not only the state but also itself; and it is no longer capable of fulfilling its basic economic functions otherwise than by



means of blood and iron.

The opportunists, who before the World War summoned the workers to practice moderation for the sake of gradual transition to socialism, and who during the war demanded class docility in the name of civil peace and national defense, are again demanding self-renunciation of the proletariat -- this time for the purpose of overcoming the terrible consequences of the war. If these preachments were to find acceptance among the working masses, capitalist development in new, much more concentrated and monstrous forms would be restored on the bones of several generations -- with the perspective of a new and inevitable world war.

The state-ization of economic life, against which capitalist liberalism used to protest so much, has become an accomplished fact. There is no turning back from this fact -- it is impossible to return not only to free competition but even to the domination of trusts, syndicates and other economic octopuses. (Manifesto of the Communist International to the Workers of the World, 1919, in Leon Trotsky, *The First 5 Years of the Communist International*, Mond Press, N.Y., pp. 21-23)

If we cannot here enter into the details of this historical period, it is however very important to draw the necessary conclusions from these developments. State capitalism began as the result of crisis and war and represents an effort by the bourgeoisie to get around or even temporarily suspend the normal laws of capitalism if they interfere with the unified effort of national capital under the aegis of the state. This situation was generalized throughout the system but it is important to note that these first expressions found their roots in the advanced countries, the capitalist metropolises.

After the war and the crushing of the proletarian revolutionary movement, the bourgeoisie which had more or less floundered into "war capitalism" measures through necessity, turned backwards and tried to retreat "back to normalcy." There were some features of government cooperation with unions and efforts to rebuild the shattered economies through a conscious effort to concentrate on key sectors which were retained, but by and large, the capitalist class put its faith in the possibility of an economic status quo ante bellum.

But the reconstruction period of the 20s was short-lived and when the crisis once again revealed the shaky underpinnings of the system in 1929 the more far-seeing elements of the ruling class began to realize that relying on "credit" and the free-play of economic laws on the Stock Market and in production would lead only to catastrophe. The theory of Keynes found an audience in the 30s by calling for the energetic intervention of the government in the economy to determine an inflationary cycle which could maintain employment and production levels. Also in vogue in Europe were the ideas of the Belgian Socialist DeMan who adapted Keynesian insights and pushed them even further to call for national planning and the rationalization of labor as the "solution" to the crisis.

These theories found an echo in the government plans of the Popular Fronts, the New Deals, and in the fascist economies. The response of the capitalist class to the crisis and depression was fundamentally of the same nature no matter what its specific political form: increased



planning and state intervention in the economy, war production, the integration of the working class and "its" organizations into the state national effort and the mystifications of fascism/anti-fascism which served to prepare the class for the mobilization for the coming war. The Popular Front and the New Deal as much as fascism or Stalinism (whatever their secondary differences) represented a development of the tendency towards statification of the economy under pressure from permanent crisis. Far from diminishing during and after the Second World War, this tendency has increased in scope and depth in the post-war years.

The international tendency towards state capitalism found its most unequivocal expression in post-revolutionary Russia. In the context of the isolation and degeneration of the proletarian revolution in Russia, the Russian state was forced by the dynamic of capitalism (which had never been completely abolished in the early years and could not have been in one country), to strengthen itself and take the economy in hand in order to defend Russian national capital in a capitalist world already in decadence. Because of the relatively weak position of Russia in the capitalist world framework statification took place in a more brutal and far-reaching form than elsewhere but the essential characteristics remained the same: centralized planning efforts with the 5 Year Plans, armaments production, the militarization of labor, Stakhanovism and the forced labor camps, the emphasis on heavy industry and the reorganization of the archaic agricultural sector. This process was facilitated by the fact that the October Revolution had largely destroyed the private capitalist class in Russia.

It is important to guard against taking the Russian example as the absolute measure of the state capitalist tendency. It is merely one form, though one of the most extreme, of a general world-wide movement of capital. State capitalism need not take the form of Stalinism; it is adaptable to the specific historical and political situation of any national capital. The fact that Stalinism specifically emerged out of the defeat of a proletarian revolution has often blinded observers to the fact that state capitalism as a world tendency is the overall expression of the present stage of capitalist decay just as laissez-faire or monopoly capitalism characterized the growth period of the system. State capitalism has no one predestined faction of defenders in the capitalist class and any one faction or another can be its carrier regardless of specific ideology. Indeed as crisis deepens all capitalist factions present state capitalist measures in one form or another because there is nothing else to offer even as a stop-gap measure.

For the working class, state capitalism has meant the integration of its previous political and economic organizations into the state apparatus: trade unions and industrial unions, cooperatives and political parties, all in an effort by the capitalist class to defuse the class struggle and enlist the workers in the "national effort" in good times and more likely in bad. In the period of decadence, just as the bourgeoisie can no longer allow the free play of the system's economic laws which would lead to crisis and break-down, it can no longer allow the class struggle to continue unimpeded in a prolonged give and take situation. Thus the efforts towards the integration of the working class through pacification, brutality and mystification to divert struggles which can find no real satisfaction in a system in decay.



The realization that the new epoch begun with the first World War had brought with it a decisive change in capitalist structure was by no means an easy step for the revolutionary movement to make. There were profound insights into this question in the early documents of the Communist International and in the works of the left communists but these insights remained limited, especially in the isolated Russian context, and often led to erroneous conclusions because of the difficulty in grasping all aspects of a complex process at its beginnings.

The analysis of the objective conditions and reasons for proletarian defeat did not come easily to the workers' movement; the fact that our analysis today rests on the heritage and experience of the left communists of the 20s, 30s, and 40s must not lead us to expect to find a total understanding of the question in the past, a completed synthesis sprung full-blown. It was only at the cost of great effort and confusion that the communist movement came to understand at least the major aspects of state capitalism and its implications for the proletarian struggle.

For Lenin and the majority of the Bolshevik Party state capitalist measures, Taylorism, nationalization, represented a rationalization of capitalism, a step forward away from capitalist anarchy in production. According to them nationalization and planning were not only necessary for the bourgeoisie but could be used by the proletarian revolution to help overcome the backward conditions in Russia. They could be a progressive step to help Russia catch up and eventually evolve along the road to socialism, once the world revolution came to their aid. Carrying over the deformations of Social Democracy and mistaking the expression of capitalist decadence for a new form that could be used "progressively" by the proletariat, Lenin and the Bolsheviks clearly prepared the way for the statification measures of Stalinist times. But they by no means identified state capitalism with socialism nor did they make any proclamations about socialism being possible in one country. They sought to use certain state capitalist measures as a possible transitional program to prepare the way to socialism. Their economic policy was by no means of a piece and there was a large dose of empiricism in the adoption of war communism, the efforts to suppress money in the famine conditions of the civil war period, followed by the abrupt about-face with the NEP. But a thread of major importance runs through these efforts: the call for nationalization of the economy under the control of the "proletarian" state, the instrument of the transitional program. This fundamental error of identifying nationalization with the socialization of the means of production was expressed in the political elimination of the soviets and the factory councils in favor of state control. The Bolsheviks who spoke of the new era of the rule of the international workers' councils in 1919 were already institutionalizing their elimination -- the elimination of the only means for the realization of a genuine social transformation. Their idea that the state was the central means to carry out revolutionary change, their complete identification of the class with the party and the party with the state merely paved the way for the real dynamic of these policies: the state capitalism of Stalinism.

Lenin and the majority of revolutionaries of his time felt that the primary danger to the revolution was the restoration of private capitalism through the continued existence of petty production and they did



not understand the dangers of state capitalism arising from the state bureaucracy they had set up. The revolution defeated by force of arms was their greatest concern and they did not understand the process of degeneration from within the state and the state-invested party.

In the early years, the Bolshevik left, the group around Ossinsky, in addition to their opposition to the treaty of Brest-Litovsk began to speak against the dangers of state capitalist methods in the economy and the possible destruction of the revolution from within. Ossinsky tried to identify where the revolution was failing and to denounce its degeneration into bureaucratism and state control.

We stand for the point of view of the construction of the proletarian society by the class creativity of the workers themselves not by ukase of "captains of industry" . . . If the proletariat itself does not know how to create the necessary prerequisites for the socialist organization of labor, no one can do it for them and no one can compel them to do this. The stick if raised against the workers will find itself in the hands of a social force which is either under the influence of another class or is in the hands of the soviet power; then the soviet power will be forced to seek support against the proletariat from another class (e.g., the peasantry) and by this it will destroy itself as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Socialism and socialist organization must be set up by the proletariat itself or it will not be set up at all; something else will be set up in its place -- state capitalism.\*

Although the left held the position that certain state capitalist measures were inappropriate for a proletarian program in the transitional period, their tacit agreement on the fact that state capitalism was indeed a rationalization of the economy, a step towards the elimination of anarchy in production, left the fundamentals of the question in confusion. In the context of economic disorganization and famine in Russia, it was difficult not to be swept into arguments about efficiency and control of production. Although state capitalism was denounced it was often seen as a danger coming from the class interests of the peasantry; state capitalism was not fully understood as the expression of the barbarism of decadent capitalism, even as its early effects in Russia were fought.

The left-communist groups which sprang up later, the Democratic Centralists around Sapranov, to some extent the Worker's Opposition, the Workers Group around Miasnikov and the Workers Truth Group were all a reflection of the last breath of proletarian participation and expression in a period of the suffocation of the revolution. The formation of these groups within the Bolshevik Party inevitably sprang from disagreements with the Bolshevik leadership on immediate and current questions rather than from profoundly worked out theoretical analyses. The denunciation of the bureaucracy of the party and the state, the lack of proletarian democracy in the soviets and factory committees, the suppression of the direct activity of the class, the integration of the unions, seem to be the principle issues which led to the formation of opposition groups. Many small circles simply based themselves on the self-evident fact that the working class was living in misery and

\* R.V. Daniels, Conscience of the Revolution, 1960, p. 85.



was economically exploited as much under the "proletarian dictatorship" as in the pre-revolutionary situation. On a general level, the primary contribution of the left was resistance to the degeneration of the revolution, pinpointing the crucial issue: the fact that the working class in Russia had been deprived of any real self-activity or class expression in the soviets, without which no "socialist construction" is possible.

But their specific suggestions for change were often centered around eliminating certain abuses of the apparatus or in any case of pointing to certain alternate methods: the call for collective leadership in the party and the state rather than individual leadership, opposition to individual managers, and later, with the Workers' Opposition, the call for economic planning through the unions and their bureaucracy rather than militarization or other means of control. The greatest contribution of the Russian left was not their specific suggestions for a "solution" to the insoluble problems of isolated Russia, but the fact that through them and their tragic call for a conscious realization that the workers dictatorship was floundering, the voice of proletarian resistance was made explicit.

The weaknesses of most of the Russian opposition groups was that they often agreed with Bolshevik international policy and confined their critiques to "internal" affairs. The Russian left did not protest the 21 Conditions in the Communist International and even the Workers Truth group spoke in favor of a rapprochement with "progressive capitalism" in Germany and America against "reactionary" France. These errors, and later conditions of illegality, aided in drastically limiting the ties between the Russian left and the European left-communists who, like Gorter, criticized Russian leadership in international policy and left internal matters, at first, in the sphere of the Russian leadership. It was very difficult at the time to see the whole scope of the very questions the left was raising. In the context of social turmoil and political confusion, none of the Russian opposition groups realized at the time the significance of the Kronstadt events. No voice was raised among the Russian opposition (and only a hesitant allusion by the KAPD at their last appearance in the Communist International) to disagree with the massacre of the revolt or to state that the last gasp of proletarian resistance was being crushed and buried at Kronstadt (whatever the specific errors of the rebels program) as it had been in the previous wave of strikes in Petrograd. The irony is that the Russian left gave their lives for this same resistance to state capitalism.

The enduring contribution of these small groups trying to come to grips with the new situation, is not that they could have possibly understood the entire process of state capitalism at its beginnings nor that they expressed a totally coherent program for revolutionary regeneration but that they sounded the alarm and were among the first to prophetically denounce the establishment of a state capitalist regime; their legacy in the workers' movement is to have provided the political proof that the Russian proletariat did not go down to defeat in silence.

Towards the end of the 20s and the early 30s the opposition groups in Russia including certain of those around the Trotskyist opposition began to seriously analyse developments in the Russian economy, particularly the Stalinist efforts towards the reorganization and central planning of agriculture. The critique of the right-wing Trotskyists



never went beyond an effort to avoid a too impulsive reorganization of the economy (and the resulting famine). At first they could hardly believe that Stalin, the supposed "representative of the peasantry" would be capable of reorganizing and centralizing the economy but the attack on the kulaks convinced them that Stalin was indeed on the correct path to rationalization and state control even if his methods and the rhythm of the process were to be criticized. Trotsky himself at the time wrote of the state raised above society but operating in the interests of the proletariat, a sort of proletarian "Bonapartism."

But these were not the only expressions of the heterogeneous early Trotskyist Opposition in Russia. The condemnation of Trotskyist positions as the last and wholly inadequate expression of resistance in the Communist International and Trotskyisms subsequent constitution into a counter-revolutionary pole embracing the political positions of the degeneration of the International should not blind us to the fact that because the Trotskyist Opposition was seen as the virulent opponents of "socialism in one country" they attracted at first, especially in Russia, many different tendencies of thought, some of which went way beyond the right-wing elements and what was soon to become the official line.

The left-wing groups who considered themselves Trotskyists in the prisons in Russia in the late 20s began to evolve towards the denunciation of the Russian state and the refusal to recognize any proletarian element in it. They naively awaited word from Trotsky abroad confirming their analysis. They eventually broke from the Opposition in 1930-32 and along with remaining elements of the Democratic Centralists and the Workers Group in prison began to work towards a political analysis of working-class experiences in Germany and wrote a series of documents on state capitalism. After disassociating themselves from any support for the Russian state, they discussed the nature of state capitalism as an economic system and the implications of this analysis for proletarian struggle. The debate apparently centered on whether state capitalism was a progressive step for the capitalist system, a new age of barbaric civilization or a parasitic capitalist form. Some comrades even denied the proletarian nature of the revolution in Russia because of the outcome of events.\* These debates were hardly very clear and few first-hand documents remain but their efforts express the constant search within the working class to understand the harsh reality of defeat.

Progress in analysing the new situation of capitalist decadence and its economic and political expression was by no means unilinear in any one political current of left-communism inside or outside Russia; the understanding of state capitalism was a cumulative process over many years with insights offered from many different left-communist tendencies. The insights of the early years of the Communist International on the possibility of new forms of capital concentration if the revolutionary wave should fail, remained a dead-letter except within the limited and isolated circles of left-communism. The major stumbling block to a synthesis was the difficulty of analyzing the positive impact of the early years of the revolution along with the germs of counter-revolution which would later flourish.

The German and Dutch left communist movements were among the first to

\* Anton Ciliga, *Au pays du grand meusouge*, Gallemard, 1938.



denounce the political orientation of the Bolshevik Party in the Communist International and the KAPD was forced to leave that body at its 3rd Congress. In the early twenties they denounced important aspects of Bolshevik policy but in general avoided direct pronouncements on Russian affairs as they were not very well-informed on the situation. The overwhelming prestige of the Bolshevik leadership favored the ridiculing and isolation of the KAPD particularly with regard to elements within the Russian opposition. The KAPD's critique of party organization as well as their opposition to the 21 Conditions cut them off from the Italian left and other opposition movements within the International which viewed the KAPD through the distortions of "Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder." Although the KAPD has left little in the way of detailed economic analysis from this period, it consistently denounced bureaucratism and the dangers to proletarian democracy. Its major theoretical work of the twenties, "Principles of Communist Production and Distribution" was an effort to define an authentic proletarian program for the transitional period in opposition to Bolshevik programs, especially the NEP. In the late 20s with the defeat of the revolutionary movement the KAPD suffered quasi complete decomposition as an organized tendency.

In the 1930s what remained of the German and Dutch left saw in the development of Hitlerism, and fascism in general, the aspects of state capitalism, a new stage in the capitalist system. Insights into the nature of state capitalism led Pannekoek in later years to reject the proletarian character of the October revolution. He felt that although it constituted an important episode in the development of the working class with the appearance of new forms -- the political strike and the workers soviets -- it was essentially a bourgeois revolution with state capitalism instituted by the "intelligensia" and the Bolshevik Party in place of the senile and impotent private capitalist class. (Cf. Lenin as Philosopher, Workers Councils). While providing an important denunciation of the Stalinist regime Pannekoek's analysis simply rejects the other side of the historical legacy: the over-all analysis of the years of revolutionary effort. Just as those who refuse to see the present because of the past, one can reject the past because of the present. The same dilemma remained for the workers movement: how to make sense of the two seemingly inexplicable ends of the scale -- a proletarian revolution and its degeneration which adopted the form of state capitalism which had appeared during the war.

This analysis led certain of the Dutch left to consider the Russian Revolution as a phenomenon growing out of specific Russian conditions instead of seeing it as intimately connected to the international wave of revolutionary upsurges at the time. A logical outgrowth of this was to see the entire 1917-21 period as simply a proletarian addenda to bourgeois reorganizations and not as a proletarian revolutionary effort in response to a new historical epoch of capitalist decline. Rather than seeing how a proletarian revolution can fail, it is regrettably less frustrating to conclude that because it failed, it never really existed.

The Italian left communist movement, on the other hand, remained within the Communist International until their expulsion in 1927, but they developed a clear political opposition to certain crucial aspects of the degeneration of the International particularly on the question of the popular front and "socialism in one country." During the Bilan



period (the journal of the Italian left in exile from 1933-1938) their opposition to popular fronts, Stalinism and Trotskyism as well as their refusal to choose between the fascist or anti-fascist wings of the bourgeoisie in the years leading to the second world war attest to the proletarian character of their political tendency. During this period, the Italian left characterized the Russian state as following counter-revolutionary policies and completely separated themselves from any support for the Russian state or the Communist parties. They called for the formation of political "fractions" of the workers' movement outside of the degenerated remnants of the Communist International, in order to prepare the work of theoretical clarification necessary for the future revival of the revolutionary struggle -- to draw the balance sheet ("Bilan") of the experiences of the defeat of the movement and to work towards a reassessment of the communist program.

In terms of an economic analysis, however, they continued to consider Russia as a "collectivized" economy. However, because the rest of the world remained capitalist the Russian proletariat, according to their analysis, was exploited by the international bourgeoisie (through unavoidable exchange relations) through the medium of the Russian bureaucracy, the "agent of world imperialism." It was not until Bordiga's studies on state capitalism in the early fifties\* that the majority of the Italian Bordigists went beyond the idea that abolishing capitalist property in private hands automatically means the collectivization of the economy.

During this period, Paul Mattick and his associates were publishing the revue Council Communism and later Living Marxism in the U.S. In recent years Mattick has elaborated his theory of the Russian economy in a series of works (see especially Marx and Keynes) which are more easily accessible today.\*\*

Starting from the observation that the state has a tendency to take over the running of non-profitable sectors \*\*\* of the economy to favor the continued functioning of the system as a whole, Mattick posits that if this tendency goes far enough the entire economy leaves the sphere of competition altogether. Thus in Russian state capitalism the economy is no longer regulated by the law of value but represents a new

\* The group Internationalisme, which broke from the Italian left in 1944, published a series of analyses of state capitalism in the late 40s upon which our tendency's studies are based. Also published in Internationalisme were a series of articles by "Morel" which developed an analysis similar to Mattick's.

\*\* See the article by MacIntosh, "State Capitalism & the Law of Value" in Internationalism #2 (RI #3 and 4 nouvelle serie) for a critique of Mattick's theory.

\*\*\* What does it mean in Marxist terms to say one branch of industry is "unprofitable?" Why one sector rather than another and why do these sectors change from one period to another within one country? Surplus value continues to be extracted but the difficulties of the national economy as a whole have momentarily found expression in one branch. It would be extremely short-sighted to deal only with the secondary aspects of a particular sector rather than seeing this as a result of the developing contradictions of the system.



system: state socialism or state capitalism irrespectively, which by its very economic nature is hostile to the "mixed" economies.

If we follow the logic of this argument, we come to the conclusion that state capitalism represents a new system which although it may have its "own" contradictions and oppressions, has resolved the economic contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production by superceding the law of value. Thus the insights of historical materialism -- that the decay of the capitalist system opens up the historical possibility of either socialism or barbarism\* (either a new system based on production for human needs and the elimination of blind economic laws or the inevitable decay and dislocation of the old society) -- must be rejected in favor of possible new mutations which are neither capitalism nor socialism. Following this analysis one can only conclude that there is somehow a possibility for capitalist society to evolve outside of socialism and the activity of the proletariat which as a class bears the historical responsibility for the establishment of new social relations, the possibility of a new alternative for humanity. Socialism becomes a far-off "possibility" in centuries to come perhaps, but not the only historically determined solution to the present crisis of the system.\*\* This theory offers another way out for the contradictions of the capitalist system -- a third system which is called "state capitalism" and which can be generalized world-wide into a new era of oppressive and non-capitalist societies. By seeing state capitalism as something different from the capitalist system as a whole instead of its logical extension, the marxist alternative of socialism or barbarism becomes an empty phrase.

If this theory of a fundamental difference between mixed and state capitalist societies were correct, we would expect to see the formation of coherent economic and political blocs representing the two "different" systems. In fact this is not the case; the Sino-Soviet split and rapprochements between China and the U.S. as well as the development of state capitalist tendencies in regimes in the west tolerated by American and European economies becomes inexplicable in terms of this theory. Politically and economically the formation of power blocs today is regulated by the same mechanism which functioned before World War I: the national self-interest of competing capitalist entities regardless of their secondary forms of internal organization.

The theory which holds that the law of value no longer regulates the Russian economy eliminates any possibility of understanding Russian or for that matter Chinese imperialism since the very nature of imperialism in our period is a function of capital accumulation. At the limit of

\* "Barbarism in marxist terms is not a distinctive social system with its own economic laws and social organization but rather the result of the degeneration of a social system which has passed its point of historical possibilities. In this sense state capitalism as an expression of capitalist decadence is representative of the barbarism of the system since World War I. "Is Stalinist Russia an example of capitalist barbarism? Yes. An example of a barbarism which is a total negation of capitalism? No." (T. Cliff, Russia, A Marxist Analysis, p. 129)

\*\* However, socialism is by no means inevitable in a mechanistic sense because without the class conscious activity of the proletariat capitalist society will only sink further into decomposition and mass destruction.



argument, this theory can serve as a sophisticated apology for Russian imperialism, considering it as "something different" and not at all like "western imperialism" in today's global conflicts. Any marxist notion of imperialism would have to be eliminated in descriptions of the "eastern" countries and because this supposedly new system represents an economic progression over the laws of capitalism, it is necessary to make a distinction between "reactionary" and "progressive" regimes, a distinction which becomes a political trap.

We will return to the question of the operation of the law of value in state capitalist economies further on, but it is important to note that a logical corollary of this theory (which remains only implicit in Mattick's own writings) is that in spite of capitalism's permanent crisis there is a possibility of developing the productive forces as a whole and particularly in the third world through this new system. Thus certain under-developed countries (which have sufficient natural resources and favorable geographic conditions) can supposedly find a way to develop their national economy in the present world. Not only is this hypothesis not borne out by reality but it can serve as a last resort for those who argue in favor of a certain "flexibility" with regard to national liberation struggles which would thus no longer be denounced as reactionary struggles leading to economic sterility and imperialist domination of one side or another, but would have an economic "justification" in this possibility of developing the productive forces through a struggle for the "new" system.

The political ramifications of Mattick's theory are extremely equivocal; apart from the fact that it corresponds more to the superficial appearance of the cold war years than to the reality of today's open crisis and inter-imperialist conflict, its theoretical division of the world into capitalist and non-capitalist sectors can only lead to a dislocation of the proletarian movement and a tendency to offer a "progressive" label to state capitalist imperialism. The fundamental error of this theory is an inability to see the functioning of the law of value on an international, general level apart from the by-passes it may take on the level of an individual commodity or on the level of the market within a national economy. In the last analysis it is the exchange relations on the world market which regulate the internal functioning of each national economy and within state capitalist countries the laws of the capitalist market are reflected in the buying and selling of labor power and the circulation of the means of subsistence in the form of commodities. Regardless of the planning of the economy or the way in which prices are fixed, the question of profits and the operation of the law of value, like that of the nature of the capitalist class itself, must be treated on a collective, over-all social level. Just as the elimination of private property in individual hands does not change the fundamental aspect of a class which is "the administrator of capital," so the modifications of certain secondary aspects of the law of value does not change the essentials of the system.

### THE TROTSKYIST TRADITION

Up to this point we have been dealing with certain aspects of the different evolution of left-communist revolutionary theory. It is important, however, to compare these insights, for all their errors or partial conclusions, with the total incomprehension and mystification



which characterizes Trotskyism's "theories" on the Russian economy. Trotskyism, a political current which grew out of the degeneration of the Communist International to become the principle "left" apologists of Stalinism and counter-revolution, has shown a complete inability to overcome a distorted version of the past: the "material gains of the October revolution." For Trotsky and his followers the legal forms under which capital operates became the determining factor of any analysis of the Russian economy. Because the revolution eliminated capitalist property in private hands (the private capitalist class), it was therefore a quasi-eternal "material gain" of the revolution that the economy was automatically collectivized and non-capitalist. The unassimilated lessons of the revolution and its degeneration continued to blind official Trotskyism to the fact that capitalism can exist without taking the form of individual private property -- that property in private hands is a secondary aspect of capital organization in a certain historical period. The state can assume control of the capitalist economy without changing the fundamental laws of the production of surplus value, capital accumulation and the ownership of the means of production "privatised" in the collective body of the state. Although Trotskyism opposed "socialism in one country," it did not and does not see that "non-capitalism" in one country is equally impossible in a world dominated by the laws of the capitalist world market.

For Trotsky, capitalism was, as for all marxists, an essentially anarchic system of social production. His error, however, was to assume that central planning in one national sector would change the fundamentally anarchic character of the system as a whole or even in that one area. Because by definition nationalization and planning were supposedly outside the laws of capitalism (as they were reflected in the 19th century in general), these new measures would "favor socialism."

Just as the Bolsheviks did not realize the dangers of statification as the instrument of a proletarian program in a world dominated by capitalism and where capital was forced to become more concentrated in the hands of the state in order to meet the problems of decadence, the Trotskyists continued this error of confusing the new manifestations of capitalism in decay for a "higher" form "favoring" socialism -- an error which has become a class line separating revolutionaries from counter-revolutionary ideology and practice. It is quite clear today in a world where every economy regardless of its percentage of formally statified capital follows national planning and a certain degree of nationalization, that these measures are not incompatible with the capitalist system. On the contrary, they are the only temporary ways, indeed, to safeguard the fundamentals of the system in a period of decadence and world war.

The imbecility of Trotskyists today who continue to speak of a "degenerated workers' state" as though the fact of degeneration can mystically continue indefinitely without becoming the tool and substance of counter-revolution is probably unequalled in the entire history of the mystifications the workers' movement has had to contend with. The "gains" of the October revolution are in fact the theoretical insights that the efforts and defeat of working-class activity can teach us today. There are no more "material" gains of October than there are of the Paris Commune; there is only the sick apologetics for the Stalinist bureaucracy that the counter-revolutionary current of



Trotskyism represents today. Their "success" in this enterprise is fed by the ignorance of the genuine revolutionary roots of left-communism and by the dead weight of the past which has for more than 50 years crushed a critical spirit in the working class not to mention among petty-bourgeois intellectuals.

From an originally false basis: an incorrect analysis of secondary aspects of capitalist organization and the inability to view the past with any objectivity, Trotskyists and all those who in one way or another have tried to build on the basis of their program have continued to defend anti-proletarian positions on the question of state capitalism and on the rest of their "programs" with all the new and improved variations and sects. There are no half-way measures in revolutionary theory. No revolutionary factions can come from a political current, which like Trotskyism continues to defend bourgeois ideology; starting from even limited aspects of Trotskyism it is impossible to go on "to develop revolutionary theory." Only a total rejection of the counter-revolution in all its forms can provide a theoretical and political basis for rediscovering the roots of the revolutionary tradition of the past and of therefore being able to participate in the elaboration of a revolutionary perspective today.

#### AN OFFSHOOT OF TROTSKYISM

The Montal faction of the French section of the IVth International after several years of faction fighting within Trotskyism broke with the IVth International in 1948 on the question of the defense of Russia. In their magazine Socialisme ou Barbarie they subsequently published studies on production relations in Russia concluding that it was an exploitative, bureaucratic system where the law of value had been eliminated and which was closer to a sort of slave society than the capitalist mode of production. Socialisme ou Barbarie did not break with certain "classical" Trotskyist positions such as support for national liberation struggles and for the union movement as part of the working-class struggle, but for a certain time they acted as a pole of attraction for different elements seeking expression in the grim years of the fifties.\*

Because their original basis for leaving Trotskyism did not rest upon a clear break with certain fundamental conceptions and because their analysis of the Russian economy, although concluding in the affirmation that Russia was not a degenerated workers' state, did not define the class nature of the bureaucracy nor the economic foundation of state capitalism in a general, international context, it is not surprising that they eventually evolved a theory which saw Russia not as a specific adaptation of statified capital but as a representative of a "third system." Their principle spokesman Chaulieu/Cardan developed the idea that Russian society had overcome the specific, economic contradictions of capitalism but according to him the fundamental

\* These various elements later broke off into various political tendencies: ICO (Information et Correspondance Ouvriere) and the GLAT in France, and Solidarity in England. Other groups such as the Situationists PouvoirOuvrier and the now defunct Gauche Marxiste, were also influenced by the analyses of SouB. Socialisme ou Barbarie is now available in French through the 10/18 collection, published under the name of Castoriades. For a critique of the theories of S ou B, see Internationalisme, 1948.



contradiction remained one of authority: the division between the leaders and the led (a dichotomy which is of course nothing new in that it exists in all class societies and is not sufficient to explain the economic and social roots of a specific society). This new system could be generalized world-wide to become a new "solution" for capitalism's contradictions although of course it was not socialism. Furthermore the discernible tendency towards this new system would eliminate world economic crisis, depressions and wars.

With relative rapidity this theory led to its logical conclusion: marxism as a theory of proletarian revolution and an analysis of objective conditions was no longer valid for the 20th century.\* Inter-imperialist rivalry became merely an "accident" of misguided governments and economic crisis was consistently denied as a possibility or, more recently, as a reality; unemployment or economic recession according to this theory are merely "local" phenomena set into motion by the machinations of evil leadership -- presumably to assert their "authority."

The end result of this theory is a logical outgrowth of the original premises. The Russian economy was analysed outside of the context of any general understanding of the period of capitalism. Specific insights to the Russian economy which can lead to rejecting it as any pretended workers' state are not sufficient; Russian elements must be seen as part of a world phenomenon and specifically and unequivocally denounced as an example of the stratification of capital. Once the door is opened to the idea that a third system can exist in the capitalist world or that barbarism denotes a system in itself rather than a decay of the old social order, the entire basis of marxism is undermined. If Russia is not identified as a class society based on the capitalist mode of production there is an inevitable tendency to divide the world proletariat -- to separate the political and economic struggles of workers in the eastern bloc from those in the west. This theory has unfortunate similarities to the theory of Mattick in that for both the marxist alternative of socialism or barbarism is hedged by the unlikely appearance of a new, third way out.

The Cardan theory is in fact another version of the super-imperialist theory of Kautsky: the gradual evolution of capitalism into a new system of "bureaucracy" which can overcome economic contradictions and unite the world. In reality, as capitalism is a system based on the separation of the means of production and the social product from the producing class, and competition through the laws of the market economy, capitalism can never go beyond the division into national capitals any more than it can "overcome" classes. Competition among nation states like the class struggle in another realm, far from diminishing in our period of capitalist decadence, have become exacerbated and pushed to the extreme limits which the society can tolerate. Any tendencies towards "unity" on the part of the bourgeoisie (except when faced with proletarian revolution) are far out-weighted by commercial rivalry, competition, and armed conflict. The basic characteristic of our period is not harmonious economic unity but the tendency towards autarky and the violent defense of the national capital unit.

\* The writings of Cardan on the end of marxism are translated and defended in English by Solidarity in England and the U.S.



There are other offshoots of Trotskyism which have tried to come to grips with the Russian state system; in his last years Trotsky himself implied that if Russia took an active part in the second world war and the division of the spoils there would have to be a re-evaluation of its status as a "degenerated workers' state." The state capitalist analysis of T. Cliff within International Socialism which provides very useful and important insights but which politically co-exists with the equivocal notion of "bureaucratic collectivism" and a slightly modified version of the Trotskyist transitional program; the conception that Russian society develops the productive forces and eliminates crises although it is not socialism and exploits the masses although it is not capitalism, that is the basis of the "managerial revolution" of Burnham and the "bureaucratic collectivism" of Shachtman in the 1940s -- which ended up as sophisticated apologies for American imperialism as the "lesser evil"; the state capitalist theory growing out of the Johnson-Forest tendency now defended by the "marxist-humanists" of News and Letters along with the traditional defense of national liberation struggles, unionism and the like, all attest to the inadequacy of an analysis that stops short of a coherent re-evaluation of political perspectives in the context of the permanent crisis of the capitalist system.\*

The root of the inability to correctly analyze the nature of state capitalism is in fact an inability to understand the fundamental characteristic of capitalism: the social relation between capital and labor power. In the 19th century and particularly within the Social Democracy, this social relation was often "simplified" into the opposition between the bourgeoisie and the workers (in the interests of clearer propaganda work -- the "boss" vs. the workers). This simplistic formulation corresponded to the level of development of the capitalist system of the period but as capital tended to become impersonal and no longer characterized by individual property relations, this notion was a hindrance to understanding reality. Marx and Engels foresaw the appearance of a unified national capital, "an ideal capital," in theoretical insights but the concrete appearance of this phenomenon left many marxists unable to comprehend the new reality. As soon as the fundamental basis of capitalism, the relation between dead and living labor is pushed aside in favor of secondary phenomena, all of marxism became incomprehensible.

Although many tendencies may use the term state capitalism, this by no means implies that their analyses are based on the same premises. Revolutionary theory is not an eclectic sum of half-truths taken vaguely from here and there or the facile use of a word as a substitute for a clear analysis. With 50 years of experience of state capitalist measures, generalized throughout the capitalist world, it is to be hoped that today's revolutionary generation will be capable of denouncing the fallacies of Trotskyist ideology and working on the basis of the insights of the revolutionary tradition to offer a synthesis of the different aspects of state capitalism which were so difficult to penetrate in the past.

Because our aim is to contribute to the development of the workers movement and not to pretend to any pseudo-objective analysis of class conditions, it is essential to note that theories which claim that state

\* It is important to mention here the state capitalist theory of G. Munis developed after W.W.I and which served as the basis for a split (cont'd.)



capitalism is a "new" system outside of the laws of capitalist development or that it is a more rational step ahead for capitalism can only conclude that proletarian revolution is no longer necessary or a quasi-utopic possibility for the far-off future in a few centuries when the new system has had time to work itself out. These theories in one form or another must necessarily conclude that the proletariat is no longer a world class nor is it the revolutionary class of the future. Without seeing state capitalism as an expression of the permanent crisis of the capitalist system in our period an objective basis for a revolutionary program becomes impossible.

### III

#### CONCLUSIONS

In this preliminary study it is essential to offer at least a framework of analysis which can help to orient future studies.

(1) The tendency towards statification of the economy is, in varying degrees, the general world trend of capitalism for more than 50 years. State capitalism is by no means a Third World phenomenon, restricted to underdeveloped countries. It has however found a stronger and more abrupt expression in certain under-developed areas where the national capital was sapped by economic backwardness and unable to compete effectively on the world market. The general difficulties of the system as a whole affect the weakest links with the greatest force. Thus the tendency to assert the interests of national capital by sweeping away the private capitalist class or incorporating it into the state apparatus in order to unify the efforts of national capital found a more extensive, far-reaching expression there. In certain countries favored by natural resources, population and other geographic factors such as existed in Russia or China, statification offered a possibility to increase their competitive position on the world market. In other areas state capitalism has not been able to free the national capital of its economic dependence in relation to foreign capital or to alleviate conditions of economic backwardness and deprivation (Cuba, Algeria, Chile to mention only the most obvious examples). It is important to note that even in the case of Russia and China, state capitalist "development" has been posited on the extensive growth of the arms economy (as in fascist Germany and to a greater or lesser extent as in every country in the modern world) and on military and strategic competition to control necessary spheres of influence. Even with the development of the H bomb for example China has scarcely achieved the industrial capacity of Belgium. The so-called development of the productive forces in these countries is a statistical reality but put in the context of the productivity levels of the advanced capitalist countries it becomes an economic absurdity typical of the period of the dislocation of the system.

In the capitalist metropolises where state capitalism found its first historical expression the tendency toward statification has been held

(cont'd from previous page) with official Trotskyism. The elaboration of this theory was based on an appreciation of capitalism's "crisis of civilization" and was accompanied by a rejection of the essential points of the Trotskyist "program."



back by the entrenched position of the private bourgeoisie and the relatively strong competitive position of the advanced capitalist countries, which did not necessitate an abrupt and complete concentration of national capital. Even during periods of relative prosperity, however, the tendency towards state capitalism was expressed in the advanced countries through the gradual fusion of the private bourgeoisie with the government bureaucracy. Nationalization and economic planning has become an acceptable and essential aspect of every capitalist economy to one degree or another, in overt or hidden forms. With the open expression of the crisis today, this tendency towards statification will be intensified and accelerated in an effort to provide a temporary breathing space for capitalism in difficulty.

A variant of the resistance to seeing state capitalism as a world tendency is the mistaken effort to separate an "integral" state capitalist economy, supposedly characterized by Russia or China, from the ordinary measures towards statification taken in the west. Although there are different relative levels of state capitalism in the world, there is no such thing as an "integral" state capitalist economy; even in Russia and China a significant percentage of production particularly in agriculture, escapes state control. The percentage of production in state hands reached 80% in Allende's Chile, a figure which rivals or surpasses the so-called "integral" state capitalisms. Under statification the competition among capital entities within the country tends to be severely reduced but antagonisms within the capitalist class cannot be totally eliminated, including those which take the form of tolerating or even, in certain sectors, encouraging production in private hands. Even with regard to ideological control over the population and the quasi-complete absorption of civil society by the state, it would be difficult if not impossible to prove that control over the population was less effective in "non-integral" state capitalist countries because in certain cases it is more incidious and less obvious; on the contrary, it is often all the more effective because accompanied by the myth of "democracy". In any case this does not constitute a proof of any "integrality" of state capitalism which would tend to make Russia or China a "special case."

(2) There is no one section of the bourgeoisie which is the exclusive carrier of state capitalist tendencies: the military (as representatives of national unity and the "forces of order"), the technical bureaucracy, the educated elite, disenfranchised tribal groups, or the powerful members of the private capitalist class in crisis can be the instruments of the state capitalist tendency depending on the specific needs of the situation. The "intelligensia" or any of these sectors are not a class in themselves and whether or not they assume the task of instituting state capitalist measures in the interests of the national capital depends more on the balance of forces within each country than any innate propensity to state capitalism in their natures as social groupings. It is worthwhile to point out that the famous intelligensia from pre-revolutionary Russia which was supposedly responsible for the "state capitalist revolution" was to a great extent eliminated by Stalin not only through the party purges but by the trials and persecutions of intellectuals and technicians in the late 20s and 30s. In large measure the Stalinist bureaucracy was composed of the "sons of the people" so popular in American culture, the corrupted waste products of the working class.



The establishment of state capitalism does not necessarily require a violent struggle between different elements of the bourgeoisie. In certain under-developed areas the private bourgeoisie had to be eliminated by force, but even in these cases large sections of the private bourgeoisie secretly or openly supported or made their peace with the new forms of organization. In the advanced countries the gradual fusion of the private bourgeoisie and the state apparatus has been going on without any major violence being necessary despite antagonisms between factions of the bourgeoisie.

To posit an innate and absolute hostility between the private and "public" bourgeoisie would imply a class difference between these two elements and these two forms of social organization which does not exist, and to consider that in fact a "revolution" was necessary for the establishing of the "new" system. On the contrary; although the "enlightened" representatives of the national interest may have to shake up the reactionary elements of their own class which may lead to open violence in unstable political situations, in periods of crisis it is generally seen as the lesser of two evils to accept the loss of private control over the means of production in order to maintain the system as a whole and enjoy the economic privileges of a place in the state network. In marxist terms, modifications in the form of capital organization do not mean a revolution. This is not to say that conflicts within the bourgeoisie do not exist or that certain "important families" may not lose out in the shuffle. The bourgeoisie has never been a homogeneous class but violence is not an inevitable factor of state capitalist re-organization and is not the expression of the struggle between two different social systems.

There is no one political banner under which state capitalist measures can be undertaken: it can be the hammer and sickle of the "communist" regimes, the storm trooper boots of the nazi regime, the military, or the "democracy" of the New Deal and the "left" of the popular Fronts. The Communist Parties of the west far from being the simple tools of Moscow (or Peking) represent one aspect of the national capital interests of their country. But they are by no means the only defenders of state capitalist measures; the nationalization measures defended by the French CP for example are not any more extensive or fundamentally different from the measures defended by the Peruvian military, perpetuated by the military in Chile, discussed by the Labour Party in crisis-ridden Britain or proposed in the early days of the McGovern campaign in the U.S. In a crisis situation there are no serious governmental factions which do not recognize the need to move towards statification and concentration although they may differ on the pace (as there may be differing opinions on how much and how fast to devalue the currency, for example). But the fundamental fact of capitalist life in the period of crisis is that there is no other even temporary means of staving off economic chaos than by statification measures.

It is not necessary to have a "left" label to defend state capitalist measures or national unity efforts in today's world; it is simply easier to mystify the awakening working class into thinking that state capitalism represents a "fairer system" for the little man or the "solution" to the crisis if you have a "left" or "democratic" mystique to "help" the workers swallow the bitter pill of economic deprivation and instability. State capitalism is always accompanied by a strengthening of the state police apparatus but it takes the specific histo-



rical form of "fascism" in the advanced countries only in periods of the total defeat of the working class; in today's world it is clear that the move toward state capitalism are covered by far more sophisticated ideological mystifications of "liberation," and "democracy" in the context of the reawakening of class struggle and the dangers this presents to the system as a whole. The tendency towards state capitalism is not only the concentration of capital in national hands but also the concerted effort toward class collaboration within the "national unity."

(3) State capitalism does not represent progress toward international unity. In the years since statification has characterized the system, we have seen the formation of more and not less national unities, a dislocation of any trends towards international fusion. Capitalism creates a world market but cannot complete the unification of the system on a world scale any more than it can industrialize the entire globe or eliminate class contradictions. An exploitative system based on division into classes, competition of capital entities (private enterprises or national capital) cannot unify the world even in a nightmare vision of one sole state capitalist power. This is more in the realm of science fiction than political analysis. This idea has credence only for those who see state capitalism as another, completely different system from capitalism itself. The only international class within capitalism is the proletariat because it has no economic privileges to defend within the system; a national bourgeoisie can help out another national capitalist class faced with the threat of proletarian revolution but it cannot go beyond the fundamental contradictions and antagonisms inherent in the system and in the class which defends and profits from it.

The much-vaunted tendency towards multi-national corporations is more a continuation of the monopoly-cartel tendencies of the 19th century than any "new" development in capitalism despite the increase in capital investment. In the 20th century, the tendency towards statification and defense of the national competitive position has overshadowed and will continue to undermine the tendency towards multi-national investment. The Citroen car company in France, for example, had some time ago put forward a plan to join with the Italian Fiat company in order to be better able to resist economic difficulties. The French government rejected the plan and preferred to see Citroen joined with the French company Peugeot through holding companies, rather than favor economic mergers outside the national interest. It must not be forgotten that much of the outcry against multi-national corporations outside the U.S. is in fact opposition to American investments abroad (particularly with the oil crisis). In the U.S. (as in every major capitalist country) devaluation measures and tariff barriers have been instituted when necessary to protect the national market even at the risk of hurting national investment in production abroad. American goods often compete with goods coming from Japan or Germany which are in fact controlled by American capital, but with the crisis these investments are put at a disadvantage to protect the interests of national capital as a whole. The carefully orchestrated attacks on the evil multi-nationals is in fact an expression of the workings of the tendency toward statification and "national unity."

State capitalism is the tightening of national economic and political defenses; it is the expression of capitalist moves towards relatively increasing autarky and commercial war and is characteristic of the period



of decadence. Increasing autarky and not moves towards international cooperation and detente is the real content of today's world, with the increasing difficulties of the Common Market and the failure of all plans for a united front of the capitalist nations whether it be in relation to the oil crisis or the need for monetary reform. As the crisis deepens the development of autarkic and state capitalist measures will increase without however being able to offer any permanent "solution" to the contradictions of the capitalist system.

(4) It has often been held that the economic difficulties which the western powers are suffering from has had little or no effect on the eastern bloc countries and that therefore state capitalism can provide an escape route to crisis. If we consider the economic criteria which define the crisis in the west and compare them to the evolution of the economies of the eastern bloc it will not be difficult to see empirically that the crisis is world-wide and that centralization and statification have not been able to solve economic problems although they can for a certain time retard their effects.

The growth rate of the national revenue of the COMECON has decreased year after year: from 10% between 1955 and 1960 and about 8.5% in 1961, it has fallen to 4.2% today. Furthermore this tendency is expressed through successive phases of recession and growth. Poland for example has had three recessions, in 1956, 1962, 1970, and Czechoslovakia experienced the same phenomenon in 1948, 1953-5, 1961-4. In these countries these recessions have certain permanent characteristics which indicate that they obey a common logic. The increasing scope of the recessions gives them a cumulative and generalized aspect. (Monde Diplomatique, Novembre, 1974)

Prices have not been stable in the eastern bloc: Poland has been experiencing open inflation -- "from 1953-1970 the price of pork doubled and beef increased by 125%". It was the Polish government's decision to raise prices (another way of decreasing the real wages of the working class) which sparked the workers' revolts at Gdansk in 1970. Government regulation of prices in the eastern bloc usually follows the method of stabilizing prices as far as possible for basic necessities and increasing prices on goods considered "luxuries" (an ambiguous word in this context) and is accompanied by a permanent lack of consumer goods. The causes of inflation are for the most part the same as in all capitalist economies: the growth of unproductive expenditures particularly for armaments (9-10% of the GNP in the USSR), maintenance of the state apparatus (necessary for the preservation of the system and the extraction of surplus value), in addition to planning errors, unbalanced investments and excessive stocking (which are analagous to waste production, advertising costs and the like in the western economies). As for unemployment, feather-bedding and underemployment have maintained the semblance of "full employment" but at the price of low productivity of labor which undermines the competitive position of Russian goods on the market.

The price of goods exchanged between the countries of the eastern bloc "were up to 1950 annually fixed on the basis of world price levels; from 1955 and in the course of successive readjustments the gap with the world market steadily increases," and even after 1964 as prices have tended to follow the general world levels more closely despite Russian resistance it is no mystery why exchange among the eastern bloc countries favors the economic position of Russia over her "partners." Although



some theorists have defended the idea that state capitalism forms a united bloc, all efforts toward economic integration and collective multi-national planning in the eastern bloc countries have failed;

. . . monetary harmony is so little in evidence that the idea of paying in gold or convertible currencies for goods within the eastern bloc is growing, which will only make these countries more open to the monetary fluctuations of the world market. (Ibid.)

The trade balance of the USSR in relation to the countries of the west has shown an increasing deficit since 1968, a fact which accounts for the western lack of enthusiasm in considering the eastern economies as an outlet for their goods and investments. The solution to the problem of the trade balance has been an increasing burden of debt in the eastern countries and for the past few years again in China . . . the same "solution" as in Britain or Italy and everywhere else.

State capitalism has not been able to avoid economic difficulties of the same nature as those that plague every capitalist country today any more than it has been a panacea for the economic development of backward countries.

(5) In a society of commodity production and generalized exchange, the law of value is the fundamental regulator of the economy as a whole. The law of value cannot be verified on the level of an individual commodity of even an individual factory; the functioning of the law of value itself -- based on the socially necessary labor time needed to produce a commodity -- can only be grasped with reference to all of world production. The very fact that state capitalist countries produce for the world market means that the law of value has repercussions on their entire national production.

The fact that the Russian state for example has a monopoly of foreign trade and that they can therefore fluctuate prices to suit the needs of national capital does not change the fact that it is a mercantile society producing for the market. Prices in themselves are a modification of the abstract law of value although their fluctuations gravitate around the axis of socially necessary labor time. The Russian state can fix prices within the country above their value or practice dumping on the world market at prices below their value but the very fact that prices exist has behind it the law of value. It is only bourgeois economists who defend the idea that prices are "arbitrary" or correspond to "needs" or other meaningless mystifications. State capitalism can modify the law of value but cannot change its fundamental existence. Even in certain western countries the price of certain commodities such as wheat is not fixed by each individual farmer but by the state in the interests of the over-all needs of the national economy.

Russia and China experienced periods of relative autarky which convinced certain theorists that the law of value no longer functioned in these societies. It is important to note that neither Russia nor any other capitalist country can eliminate itself from the world market and practice total economic isolation. The autarky of Russian or Chinese development was relative and not absolute; it constituted a deviation of the law of value in the same way as protectionist legislation in western countries does. The basic motive behind such policies is the fact that commodities are not competitive in relation to the world market and therefore the internal market must be protected. This relative autarky



did not resolve the problem of how to get the machines and sophisticated techniques which Russia needed to develop her economy. For this she was forced to practice extensive dumping on the world market (especially in raw materials, such as wheat) in the thirties. The fact that exchange was carried out in this manner in no way changed capitalism's fundamental laws. Sooner or later state capitalist countries were forced to leave relative autarky to the extent that the fundamental question remained one of eventually gaining competitive positions on the world market -- a world market already in crisis. Moreover, the economic concomitant of this deformation of the law of value was the wide-spread appearance of the black market.

Even within the Russian economy the law of value has not been eliminated. Commodities are not freely distributed but must pass through the mechanism of the market. Workers receive wages for their labor power and not freely distributed goods. The fact that wages are fixed by the state and have had a tendency to be fixed toward the necessary minimum does not mean that they are simply "arbitrary" devices. Wages cannot be fixed arbitrarily but only in relation to the minimum subsistence necessary to reproduce labor power. Russian workers clearly produce more than that vital minimum, the rest going into the production of surplus value and the accumulation of capital. The price the state offers as wages is no more arbitrary in terms of capitalist laws than when the state in western countries fixes wages in tri-partite boards with representatives of unions and management. The Polish workers revolt has furthermore shown that the class struggle can influence the price of labor power in all phases of state capitalist organization.

If an internal market does not exist in Russia or China why has money not been eliminated -- the universal equivalent necessary for the operation of the law of value in capitalist society? It is true that the sale of goods from one sector of production to another has been eliminated in Russia but this is not a fundamental contradiction incompatible with capitalist production. In large modern factories goods are not "sold" from one shop to another; in a large trust the goods from one sector are not sold to the others. In a trust such as Italy's Fiat, the surplus value contained in steel, batteries and various engine components are all realized on the market only through the sale of the car, the final product.

What has blinded observers of state capitalism and even marxist economists is the erroneous notion that when capitalism is not in individual hands but the collective property of the state it somehow ceases to function as capital. "To try to give a definition of property as of an independent relation, a category apart -- an abstract eternal idea -- can be nothing but an illusion of metaphysics or jurisprudence." (Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy)

There is no mystery in the fact that the means of production are in the hands of a ruling bureaucracy. Instead of a private capitalist class there is a collective capitalist class which manifests itself through the state, which utilizes the surplus value and directs the economy. The bureaucracy is not an economically disembodied class which merely asserts its "authority;" it assumes the same functions in relation to capital as the private bourgeoisie. Weak economic formations and inefficient managers are eliminated not through direct competition but through the struggles of rival factions of the bureaucracy. Each plant manager has to justify his economic role in much the same way as compe-



tion "judges" the efficiency of other capital entities.

The bureaucracy in Russia or China has an economic function in terms of the capitalist system and benefits from definite economic privileges. During the early years of economic difficulty, state capitalist regimes, like capitalism in the early 19th century, reinvested a large part of profits and reduced the economic privileges of the ruling class to a minimum for a certain time. But since this early period,\* it has become obvious that the collective capitalist class in the eastern bloc has distinct economic and social privileges to defend within the system.

There is no way to prove that this system of capitalist organization is any more inherently "rational" than any other. In fact, unproductive expenses involved in planning errors, unbalanced production and bureaucratic mismanagement rival unproductive expenses in the western countries. The "rationality" of state capitalist organization stems from the fact that it offers a more centralized defense of the national capital in a period when the contradictions of the system have led to permanent crisis.

State capitalism has not eliminated imperialism as it cannot eliminate the very basis of capitalist production -- the need to accumulate capital. Russian control over the eastern bloc countries, her investments in Africa, India, and the Middle East, as well as the conflict with the U.S. for control of the Mediterranean attest to the fact that Russian imperialism is of the same nature as American or British or any other imperialism. China's inroads into Africa and her attempt to carve out a sphere of influence in Asia give the lie to the supposed "anti-imperialist alliance" of those China seeks to attract into her orbit. Inter-imperialist rivalry divides the state capitalist countries and pits them against each other with the same ease as it divides any other capitalist countries: the examples of the Bangladesh and the Biafran wars which saw Russia and China on opposite sides has done a great deal to clarify this issue.

(6) State capitalism, because it has not and cannot supercede the capitalist system cannot eliminate class struggle or the danger of proletarian revolution. The example of the Polish workers' struggle in 1970 has been a resounding rejoinder to the paeans to the workers

\* It is incorrect to state that Russia underwent a process of primitive accumulation in the 30s. Primitive accumulation is a historical phase of the capitalist system which corresponds to the 17th, 18th, and early years of the 19th centuries. The development of a system of social production does not follow the vagaries of isolated areas. Moreover, Russia was a capitalist country before 1917. What she experienced in the 30s was a national effort to increase production and the productivity of labor to levels which would be competitive on the world market. This is not at all the same as stating that each country must somehow recapitulate the entire progress of the system as a whole. The use of the term primitive accumulation is an ambiguous formulation which can imply that pre-revolutionary Russia or pre-1945 China was somehow a non-capitalist economy -- an a-historical and absurd confusion of the nature of the capitalist system and how the world market has penetrated previously pre-capitalist economies.



paradise and to the idea of class conciliation. In a period of defeat and counter-revolution, state capitalist economies were able to control the working class. The strength of the police apparatus and continued efforts to mystify the working class into thinking that state capitalism represents their interests must not be underestimated but the beginning of international workers' struggles which has characterized the period since 1968 has found expression in countries of varying degrees of statification and state organization and has reaffirmed the essential unity of the proletarian condition and the revolutionary promise all over the world.

There are no "miracle cures" for capitalism, no "new" systems or economic panaceas. As the contradictions of the capitalist system have developed, the system has responded through the tendency toward statification. State capitalism to one degree or another is the only temporary means of survival for national capital in a period of permanent crisis, inter-imperialist conflict and class struggle. State capitalism survives only in the absence of the proletarian solution to the contradictions of the capitalist system.

JUDITH ALLEN



## SPAIN: THE MANOEUVRES OF CAPITAL AND COMBATIVITY OF THE WORKERS

In Spain, as everywhere else, the crisis has struck; and it strikes even harder there because during the '60's Spain had known very rapid economic growth. With its 8.6% annual growth between 1960 and 1965 it was the European champion only outstripped in the western world by Japan. Like most economies which have grown too quickly, the Spanish economy feels the crisis the hardest inasmuch as it has not had time to set up the administrative, financial and commercial structures capable of softening the impact of the crisis, and to the extent that most of its capital comes from foreign countries which are eager to withdraw it when things go badly. If the situation in Spain is not as catastrophic as it is in Japan -- which with production down 6.5% has become the champion of negative growth after having been the growth champion -- Spain is nevertheless well placed in the march towards depression. If its rate of inflation (around 16%) is not on the whole higher than France's for example, in other domains the OECD makes alarming forecasts:

The growth of production could decrease perceptibly with respect to the two preceding years. A strong increase in the number of unemployed could occur at the end of 1974. In 1974, the commercial deficit could reach  $5\frac{1}{2}$  billion dollars.\*\*

The past performances of the Spanish economy have been obtained at the price of a furious exploitation of the proletariat of this country. The poverty which reigns in Spain is not a myth even if the massive increases in the productivity of the Spanish workers have recently permitted them to begin to have access to some of the small "gadgets" of the advanced countries, particularly the auto. For a great number of workers, 2 days of labor are needed to "make ends meet," which means that 14 hours of work a day is not unusual.

For the Spanish proletariat the deepening of the crisis means an intensification of this exploitation, which is already difficult to bear. As a consequence of this intensification of exploitation, its combativity has for the past several years placed it in the first rank of the world proletariat. The general strikes in Pamplona, Vigo, El Ferrol (Franco's native city), the different movements which have shaken Barcelona and its suburbs from the strike of 20,000 SEAT workers in 1971 until the

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\* This article first appeared in Revolution Internationale, #11, Sept. 1974.

\*\* Etudes économiques de l'OCDE, Espagne, pages 42-43. Still it is necessary to point out that the OECD has not had a tendency to err on the side of pessimism, since it foresaw for the first half of 1974 growth of +2, +3.25 and +7 and rates of inflation of +7, +7 and +7.75 respectively for the U.S., Great Britain and Japan, while the true figures are in fact: -2.75, -6, -6.5 for "growth" and 11.5, 16.5 and 29.75 for inflation!



recent strike of 30,000 workers in Bajo Llobregat,\* without even counting the many work stoppages of the Asturian miners, which only the arrival of coal from "Socialist and Workers" Poland could end -- all these facts indicate that after its terrible defeat of 1936-1939, the Spanish working class is returning again to disturb the repose of the bourgeoisie and is posing for them the necessity of finding a means by which to subdue it.

With the systematic and ferocious repression of the Franco dictatorship showing itself to be more and more incapable of controlling the situation, the Spanish bourgeoisie -- like every bourgeoisie in a period of rising workers struggles -- in order to be able to effectively face the workers needs to mystify them, to divert their struggles and guide them into a dead end. The present regime is too discredited and hated to be able to accomplish this task. It must therefore be replaced; this is what is being said more and

\* In Pamplona a city-wide general strike lasted a whole month. The strike was extremely militant, though at the same time strongly influenced by Basque nationalists. In the Galician city of Vigo in 1972 barricades were set up in the streets in the course of the general strike. Police repression led to a generalization and widening of the strike. In El Ferrol in 1972 the general strike began at the state-owned shipyards over questions of speed-up and general intensification of exploitation. The strike quickly spread throughout the city which was the scene of mass demonstrations and street fighting. SEAT, Spain's largest producer of automobiles, which is owned by the state and the Italian Fiat company, had its Barcelona plants struck in 1971. The strike began over solidarity with fired workers and spread from shop to shop. The workers held a huge demonstration in the city and occupied the factory. When police were sent to re-occupy the factory, there was a battle in which workers hurled spare parts at the police who shot and killed several workers. The strike was notable not only for its militancy but for the fact that the workers organized general assemblies in the plant which were not controlled by the Stalinist dominated Workers Commissions. This strike was largely overlooked by the European "left" in favor of the trial of Basque nationalists which took place in Burgos around the same time and which was the occasion for anti-fascist and nationalist propaganda. Bajo Llobregat is a workers' district in the suburbs of Barcelona. The strike began in July 1974 in solidarity with fired workers and quickly spread throughout the district. The police restricted themselves to trying to contain the workers and preventing them from marching to the center of Barcelona. The instability of the government seems to have led to hesitancy in crushing the strike outright. The combativity of the workers, however, did not extend to any autonomous forms of organization and was contained by the workers commissions which managed to exhaust and fragment the movement, doing the job of the police all the more effectively through typical trade union strategy and tactics. In general, strikes in Spain are extremely militant and rapidly become generalized because the workers are immediately confronted by the state and police repression. Inasmuch as the union apparatus is less strongly implanted there, strikes have a better possibility of becoming generalized and creating new forms of organization. Parallels with the sudden bursts of combativity in Poland and other East European countries are evident.



more openly in almost all the bourgeois milieux and in the press.

The "left" putsch of April 25 in Portugal and more recently the return of "democracy" in Greece have given wings to the "democratic" aspirations of the Spanish bourgeoisie which, through its press, hailed these as "important events."

Old, sick, the symbol of a decrepit regime, Franco has become an encumbrance for the Spanish bourgeoisie. His recent illness gave hope to the bourgeoisie and precipitated its grand manoeuvres with a view to relieving the situation, but his return to work has once again complicated an already fairly inextricable situation.

In effect, if as in Portugal, the bourgeoisie needs a "good dose of democracy" in order to try to straighten out a very bad economic and social situation, it must take into account a whole series of factors which did not intervene in the April 25 operation:

- exceptional combativity on the part of the proletariat;
- the violent hatred of the proletariat for a regime which symbolizes its defeat and its humiliation;
- the presence of a relatively powerful Stalinist party;
- the resistance of an "old guard" of extremists who are characterized by an intransigence forged in the fire of the civil war and who have supporters in the army and the police.

In Portugal, if the workers had already engaged in important battles before April 1974 they were not yet at the level of those which today take place in Spain. Unlike the Franco regime, the Salazar regime was not born in a bloodbath; which on the one hand (despite its unpopularity) did not make it the symbol of proletarian defeat and on the other hand did not permit the constitution of a powerful faction of "nostalgics" united by virtue of their past campaigns. Finally, the Portuguese Stalinists only began to have any important weight when they were called into the government.

In Spain, the factors already mentioned are such that the bourgeoisie is walking a tightrope: it is necessary to absolutely prevent the least false step, the least hitch in its manoeuvre, under pain of seeing the masses of workers burst into struggles incomparably more violent than those which followed the Portuguese April 25. It is necessary for the Spanish bourgeoisie to resolve the following problem: TO SET UP A DEMOCRATIC REGIME

- which has the confidence of the workers;
  - which does not provoke a desperate reaction by the "old guard" extremists
  - in a way which does not unsettle the institutional structures.
- In other words, the bourgeoisie must practically square the circle.

The only government in which the workers could have confidence would be a left government including the C.P. But, taking into account the power of the C.P., which would make it a cumbersome partner, the persistent hatred and distrust towards it on the part of important sectors of the Spanish bourgeoisie since the civil war and finally the pressures exercised by the American protector, it seems that Spanish capital will try to exclude the Stalinists from its plans. It is difficult to see how the old "crusaders" in the struggle against "atheistic Bolshevism" could accept the accession of



the Stalinists to power, above all since the C.P. is more and more left behind in the present struggles and risks, after winning governmental posts, not being able to control the working class -- which is its function. In this case, its anti-working class effectiveness would be greater by remaining an opposition party.

This is the meaning of the constitution in August of a regroupment around the Monarchists, Christian democrats and Social democrats within which Ruiz Jimenez, Franco's old minister, plays an important role, and which is the counterpart to the "Democratic Junta" constituted on July 30 by the C.P. and Calvo Serrer, the old head of the newspaper "Madrid", who is close to Don Juan, the Count of Barcelona.

The succession to Franco seems to be between three currents (in addition to the "integralists" now grouped around Franco's son-in-law, the Marquis de Villaverde):

- the current led by the present head of government, Arias Navarro whose violence (the arrest of the Assembly of Catalonia at Sabadell, the call for repression against the Basques) is accompanied by warnings against the extremists "bound to the old ways" and compliments for the press which "kept pace with events" during Franco's illness when it called for an end to "authoritarianism" and "dictatorship"
- the "centrists" of Ruiz Jimenez and company
- the "Democratic Junta" of Carrillo (the C.P. leader) and Calvo Serrer

At the institutional level, if Don Juan Carlos seems to be the candidate for the throne of the "extremists" as well as the partisans of Arias Navarro, his father Don Juan, the Count of Barcelona, could be the candidate of the two other currents.

In fact, these different currents do not represent three or four well differentiated alternatives for Spanish capital. Before the failure of the C.P. to make a place for itself among the Caudillo's heirs it was associated in the attempt to constitute a provisional government around Don Juan, uniting the Monarchists, liberals, the Carlists\*, the autonomist bourgeoisie\*\* and the C.P. The meeting in Geneva on June 23 was to have served to announce the constitution of this provisional government. In spite of the failure of this attempt, Santiago Carrillo (the C.P. leader) declared at this meeting:

Today, the question which is posed in an immediate way for all Spaniards is not the establishment of a socialist government or even a left government; it is the establishment of a government of national reconciliation.

This is a statement which signifies that the C.P. is determined at any price not to break with anyone, even those who were in the other camp during the civil war (national reconciliation). Moreover,

\* Right wing Monarchists who support another branch of the Borbon dynasty in the person of Hugo Carlos de Borbon Parma.

\*\* The Basque and Catalan bourgeoisie who supported the republic during the civil war and who have since lost ground in the struggle against the centralizing tendency of Spanish capital concentrated in Madrid.



through Calvo Serrer and the "Democratic Junta," the C.P. remains linked to the "centrists" of Don Juan, who are in contact with the official Monarchists who support his son, Juan Carlos\*, who are close to Arias Navarro, and have not broken the bridges to the "old guard" extremists.

This de facto holy alliance of capital is made indispensable by the difficult nature of the operation which the Spanish bourgeoisie must carry out. For all these parties the enemy is the proletariat, and it is for this reason that they are trying not to destroy the links which unite them even if they are not in agreement on the best way to mystify and to defeat the proletariat.

Their holy alliance would have no chance of being effective if it was not complemented "at the base" by a whole network of different workers' commissions (C.P. locals, sections of the "leftist" Bandera Roja or "anti-capitalist forums" for ouvrierist elements) which are themselves more or less openly associated with the state-controlled vertical trade union (CNS) in the effort to smother the combativity of the class.

Thus, the whole apparatus is in readiness. The only fly in the ointment is the growing combativity of the proletariat, which more and more overwhelms not only the C.P. but even the "leftists" of Bandera Roja and their respective workers commissions. It is in order to try to get the situation back under control that the workers commissions and the C.P. are preparing a one day general strike for October. This will have the double advantage of regilding their coat of arms and of pointing out to the other bourgeois forces that it is necessary to take them into account.

Thus in Spain, perhaps more than elsewhere, proletariat and bourgeoisie are face to face and preparing for their confrontation. The specific conditions in this country which make it a weak link in the capitalist chain, with an extremely combative proletariat which has stored up against its present exploiters an enormous reserve of hatred, risk making it the theatre of one of the first great confrontations between capital and the world proletariat.

In 1936, Spain was the terrain for the completion of the crushing of the working class after the revolutionary wave of 1917-1920 as well as a decisive step in the preparation for the second World War.

Today, history has willed that Spain (as well as Portugal as we pointed out in our international appeal of June 1974\*\*) again finds itself at a decisive turning point in the world situation. By its proximity to the great European industrial centers, and because of the pack of mystifications engendered by the civil war of 1936, the outcome of the struggle which is building there is of the greatest importance for the future of the struggle of the international working class. It is for this reason that we revolutionaries must energetically denounce the present manoeuvres of the different

\* Father and son recently met on a yacht loaned by the big businessman Barrieros.

\*\* See Internationalism #5, "In Portugal: Capital Confronts the World Proletariat".



parties of the bourgeoisie, particularly those of the extreme left (like Bandera Roja in Spain, Lutte Ouvriere or the FCR in France, the WRP and the IMG in Britain and the Spartacist League and the Workers League in the U.S.) which make themselves, through their more thorough going anti-fascism, their remodelled unionism and their appeals to "autogestion" (workers control), more and more the left pimps of capital and in the last resort its spare tire.

C.G.

### Salute to Accion Proletaria

It is in the context described above that the first two numbers of Accion Proletaria (July and September)\* have been published. Their contents are as follows:

- #1 -- Declaration of Principles (English translation in Forward, Vol. 1, Nos. 3-4, Summer-Autumn 1974)
- On the union question, The Workers Commissions: A Counter-Revolutionary Illusion (English translation in this number of Internationalism)
- Unions and Wildcats (which appeared in Internationalism #1, and of which reprints are available)
- In Portugal: Capital Confronts the World Proletariat (which appeared in Internationalism #5)
- The General Strike in Bajo Llobregat
- #2 -- The Same Dogs with Different Collars (The Succession to Franco)
- The Programme of the Popular Front of 1936
- Chile: The Irresistible Fall of Allende (which appeared in Internationalism #4)
- The General Strike in Bajo Llobregat (Lessons)
- The Conflict in the Spanish Sahara

Accion Proletaria is part of the same international tendency already constituted by Internationalism (USA), World Revolution (Great Britain), Internacionalismo (Venezuela) and Revolution Internationale (France).\*\* Its Declaration of Principles is based on the same orientation as those of the other groups.

In the midst of the problems that today confront the Spanish proletariat -- the anti-fascist, democratic, trade union and worker's control mystifications that must be surmounted so that the proletariat can avoid the dead end towards which the different factions of capital are leading it and move onto the road to revolution -- the appearance of this journal is an enormous step in the process by which it becomes class conscious. WE SALUTE IT AS SUCH.

These problems, these mystifications, sometimes under different garb, are the same for the whole of the world proletariat. It is for this reason that we are publishing a translation of "The Workers Commissions: A Counter-Revolutionary Illusion" from #1 of Accion Proletaria.

\* A third number has just come out, but has not yet been received here.

\*\* Recently joined by Rivoluzione Internazionale in Italy



## PREFACE TO THE UNION QUESTION

The word union does not only designate those organizations which call themselves unions. There are strike committees, "commissions," etc., which step into the struggle during a strike and disappear at the end which also qualify as unions. However, there are organizations which attempt to unify the class and have a permanent existence to which we do not give the name "union."

We mean by "union" or "union organization" or of a union type all organizations which:

- 1) Organize (or attempt to organize) workers on a mass base, that is to say, without political criteria for membership;
- 2) Hold as an objective the defense of the immediate interests of the workers in winning material improvements (wages and working conditions);
- 3) Exist in a permanent way, that is to say they continue to exist even when the workers they are attempting to organize are not in struggle.

The permanent "workers commissions" satisfy these three conditions and are today true "unions." Although illegal today, tomorrow under a democratic government, they will be the official organ for the integration of the class by the state.

The purpose of this article is to clearly describe the inevitably counter-revolutionary character of any form of union organization.

### WORKERS COMMISSIONS: A COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY ILLUSION

#### Introduction

Every workers' organization of a permanent character must be analyzed from the perspectives which they pursue. In the case of Workers Commissions there is real resistance by those militants who are called left or vanguard to accepting that these organizations are oriented toward a particular political position. There is a tendency to see the Workers Commissions as the embryo of the future organization of the class with no more present purpose than the "struggle against exploitation."

In this context, it is logical to think that all workers engaged in the struggle must join the Workers Commissions. It is also logical that these same militants see a denunciation of the counterrevolutionary character of the Workers Commissions as nothing but an attempt to destroy the Commissions.

However, the Workers Commissions do have a political line and furthermore a well defined and concrete one: "The struggle against the dictatorship and for labor union." And you can find these political objectives in any tract of the Commissions, and in all the practical activity of their militants.

However much they attempt to deny it all those who support the Commissions are defending the same politics which in 1936 were expressed in



the slogan "First win the war against fascism, then the socialist revolution." These same individuals attempt to make the working class believe that the demise of the Franco regime and the installation of a democratic faction of the bourgeoisie is going to soften exploitation.

The fact that the Workers Commissions are in practice the only organization which have some workers in them cannot serve as justification for a false "ouvrierism," which is willing to accept any political line on the condition that the working class organizes.

It is evident "workers organizations" always exist in the midst of capitalism. The proof of this is the existence of unions of various tendencies, corporatist organizations, etc. But the fact that these organizations have workers does not necessarily mean that they are organizations of the working class.

What makes an organization revolutionary are its class objectives. If the working class is the only revolutionary class, then the only positions which a working class organization ought to defend are those which play a revolutionary role.

The positions that the Workers Commissions defend; a purely corporatist struggle, union struggle, anti-fascist struggle and their organizational forms (hierarchical, bureaucratized, hidden domination of political parties) invalidate them as organizations of the working class for many workers who join them. The task of revolutionaries is to keep them from getting their hooks into the class.

To speak today of the Workers Commissions is to speak of a fistful of militants of "leftist" parties organizing the Commissions in the factories. More than ten years of union practice and reformist attempts have been sufficient to begin to awaken the proletariat to the deceit and mystification of the Workers Commissions.

The fact that the Commissions are in a crisis has no significance when the class struggle has ceased to develop. The disappearance of its militants in many factories, the abandonment of the Commissions by others has often meant the reinforcement of the struggle through other means such as factory assemblies with committees reportable to and revocable by the Assembly.

Beginning with 69-70 when, principally in Catalonia and the north of Spain, coinciding with the beginning of the crisis of the Workers Commissions, there began a struggle of extraordinary harshness initiated and directed by the Factory Assemblies which in this fashion dispensed with the good offices of the Workers Commissions.

Therefore, the critique of the Workers Commissions and its denunciation is no liquidationist task. IT IS THE WORKERS OWN MOVEMENT IN ITS STRUGGLE WHICH HAS LIQUIDATED THE COMMISSIONS. But, at the same time, the fact that the commissions are in a crisis does not mean that they have disappeared or are disappearing.

The counterrevolutionary power of the Commissions rests in the positions they defend and these positions because they are bourgeois will not disappear with the Commissions except upon the liquidation of the bourgeoisie. It is for this reason that our revolutionary



activity consists of denouncing all those who attempt today under the name of Workers Commissions and tomorrow under any other name to deflect the proletariat from the road to proletarian revolution by leading them into the swamp of struggles against fascism, for democracy and for national liberation.

### Birth and Development of the Workers Commissions

Coinciding with accelerating industrial development, the struggle for an improved standard of living progressed slowly, until it generalized throughout Spain.

In 1962, the particular and conjunctural conditions of this industrial development (the stage which followed the Stabilization Plan of 1959) made it possible for the workers for the first time since 1939 to attempt to defend themselves against a deteriorating standard of living, to forget the queues and ration cards of a few years before and to revive again the illusion of reformism without fear of cruel repression by capital.

With the appearance of the Collective Agreements, there opened a new stage of wage negotiations in which workers actively intervened.

In these circumstances (as theoretically favorable to the old union forms -- CNT, UGT\*-- as to others born during post war period in Spain -- USO, OSO, ASO) there appeared, winning over all political groups a form of workers organization for the defensive struggle which rapidly eclipsed most of the illegal union organizations: COMMISSIONS OF WORKERS ELECTED BY THE FACTORY ASSEMBLIES, The Workers Commissions.

However, it would be false to deduce that the crisis and the rejection of the existing union organizations signified the rejection of unionism by the working class. The union organizations which existed such as the USO, OSO, ASO, never succeeded in developing as an effective opposition to the vertical union (CNS).

These organizations in reality consisted only of militants from the political organizations (PSOE, PCE) who were trying to maintain their old positions from the republican period.

Overwhelmed by the first massive Assemblies and confronted by the task of controlling the workers movement, they dismantled their union organizations with the intention of dominating the workers commissions and converting them into the Union that they were never able to build. Therefore, the break with the old organizations doesn't signify a break with union conceptions.

The facts clearly demonstrate that the workers commissions have as a principal activity the defense of the economic interests of the working class. From the very beginning, all struggles of the workers commissions were economically "defensive".

Even though many of the struggles have been great defeats from the defensive point of view, it is still true that (primarily before the international recession of 1967-68, strongly felt in Spain) the

\* See p.     for an explanation of the abbreviations used in this article.



prestige and numerical growth of the Commissions was due precisely to the possibility of obtaining immediate improvements through struggle. The Provincial Collective Agreements of the Metalurgical branch of Madrid, the improvements obtained by the Asturian miners, etc., were an important springboard for the development of the Commissions throughout Spain.

So much so, that it was a rare case in which a factory struggle did not result in the appearance of a workers commission, which grew out of the struggle or was created by the impulse to control it.\*

But even in those cases where victory was won it was soon turned into defeat. Permanent inflation, the increase of productivity primarily obtained through speed-up and the constant rise in the prices of food and consumer goods ate up the hard won wage gains which had been so painfully extracted. It's no secret to anybody that wages have lost their buying power and that the situation of the Spanish working class, which is the same as that of the working class of the whole world (even if you can find something which can be treated as merely due to "bad management" on the part of Spanish capital) has

\* The Commissions appeared in many factories in the heat of the strikes which began in the 60s in Spain. They grew, disappeared, and re-appeared, they moved to the rhythm of the advances and the retreats of the struggle.

This instability in their continuity as an organization was an enormous obstacle to the formation of a "labor union," therefore the leftist parties with the PCE at the head pushed for the creation of permanent hierarchial organizations with executive bodies (coordinating local, regional, provincial and national affairs) which independent of the conjuncture and of the struggle enforced a political orientation on all the workers and all their struggles -- as isolated and dispersed as they were -- and set the same goal for both their own partisans and others: the struggle against the dictatorship and for corporatist reforms.

And it was the PCE, the organization by its financial and propagandistic power, which was able to seize power in almost all these organizations throughout Spain. Its politics of National Reconciliation and of a "Pact for Liberty" were only able to develop under the condition of having a certain clout with the workers. And the Commissions became the "cannon fodder" for the PCE.

The impossibility of obtaining real and lasting improvements led to apathy and the resistance by the workers to organizations of the form established by the Workers Commissions. More and more, and beginning with the 70s, the struggles (which had not decreased in number or intensity) developed on the fringes of the official organizations of the Commissions.

Again the struggles developed with the Factory Assemblies; unity committees, etc., outside and sometimes in opposition to the Commissions.

Today we can say that the Workers Commissions are nothing more than creatures of certain political groups, who are remaking them in the image of the USO, OSO, etc.



only gotten worse.

With the recession of 1968 and the State of Exception which followed, the "illusions" of victory of the previous years evaporated. The massive Assemblies in the countryside, the use of "legal" and semi-legal methods by the directors of the Workers Commissions, the infiltration of the local unions, the defensive success of the Collective Agreements, etc., were cut short by detentions, jailings, deportations, expulsions or dismissals from union positions, the impossibility of obtaining real and lasting benefits, all of these demonstrate clearly and openly the true face of a system already incapable of giving any improvements to the working class.

### Left Wing Unionism

The crisis of the Workers Commissions, their incapacity to enlist the Spanish working class behind the objectives of a struggle for "labor unions" and for bourgeois democracy, has at the same time provoked many militants to leave the Commissions and to form autonomous organizations outside of the control of the permanent directors of the movement.

This break, which in some cases incorporates political criticism of the Commissions (unionism, pact for liberty, republican democracy, etc.) translates as a general rule into the organization of new commissions to the left of the PCE and the Bandera Roja. Within these new Commissions we see the growth of militant elements of minority political organizations.

But for the majority of these, the crisis of the Workers Commissions reduces to its "bureaucratization", to its lack of "real organization in the factories" and to its "control by the political parties." They say it is the leaders who are impeding the extension and consolidation of the Workers Commissions.

In a document edited by the "Autonomous Workers Groups", the following analysis of the crisis is made:

It has been us workers who have paid the consequences of this sectarianism due to our political inexperience. While we were fighting in the factories and mines, we were letting our supposed representatives destroy, in our name, what we were beginning to build. Naused, disillusioned we abandoned these false representatives of the working class and continued struggling in our own work places. We organized strikes such as we had not seen in years. In the Basque country: Laminacion de Bandas, Altos Hornos, La Naval; in the Asturias: the mines and metalurgical works; in Pamplona: Eaton Iberical and Potases de Navarra. Harry-Walker, Blansol, Macosa, machinists in Barcelona; "Aviation" and "Saca" in Seville; Altos Hornos in Sagunto, etc., etc., these are names which will not be forgotten because of the heroic strikes which happened there, at times models of strike organization but which lacked however the solidarity and the aid which alone would have allowed them to achieve unity.

The Spanish proletariat has demonstrated its combativity, but



it has been incapable of creating an organization which would be an expression of this high level of struggle. Meanwhile, bureaucrats and party hacks distributed the spoils of what might have been the great organization of the class.

We can't blame anyone but ourselves that we were not able to create a workers organization capable of defending our interests. The task of the bourgeoisie and its allies is to create disharmony among the workers. It would be too easy to blame the capitalists for attempting to defend their interests. That is their purpose.

But our purpose is to organize and to stop the infiltration of elements foreign to our organization. The workers who are struggling in the factories have the responsibility for establishing an indispensable coordination between the factories with an eye toward mutual aid and the elaboration of a program of action. This must be our task, which we must not leave in the hands of professionals who serve the interests of groups, which have their heads stuffed with false ideological problems in whose defense they are capable of destroying an organization which has cost us years of struggle and sacrifice to put up.

For them, the question reduces to the problem of stopping those "party leaders" from insinuating themselves into the workers organizations. How do we stop them? By explaining to the workers the necessity of organizing to struggle for economic and social improvements of all types (more than half of the document above is dedicated to explaining all the defensive possibilities which can influence or radicalize the struggle in the factory); by explaining how to organize a Commission or similar organization; by explaining how to elaborate a defensive platform which would be heard by the majority of workers in the factory or the means to make them heard (posters, leaflets, stickers, etc); by organizing the most conscious workers, etc.

The only thing that they do not propose is the constant denunciation of the politics of the said groups (the interests of the class become converted by them into the interests of the group!), "groups with false ideological problems" which destroy the organizations which have been created by so many sacrifices. It is only a question of "bureaucrats", "party hacks", "professionals", "foreign elements."

By not denouncing the class interests of these said groups and by not defining another political line in the real interests of the working class, any new Commission set up will automatically end up like those they pretend to fight.

Thus, to avoid speaking on those questions which have the power of dividing the working class\* into various factions; questions such as the role of unions in the decadent phase of capitalism, national

\* The working class cannot be divided into a revolutionary half and a reactionary half. The working class in its entirety is the revolutionary class. Workers taken as individuals (even if they are a majority) can take the interests of another class as their own and in that way oppose the interests of their own class.



liberation struggles, state capitalism, etc., they provoke great confusion and end up defending the same or similar positions to the PCE.

On page 44 of the document cited above, they give an example of the advantages which according to them the proletariat can gain from labor unions:

where it is already accomplished (they are referring to the establishment of labor unions) -- Russia, China, Cuba, Syria, Algeria, Zambia, Vietnam, etc., -- the workers have taken power from the capitalists. Other places are on the verge of following -- South America -- and in others they have organizations capable of defending their most elemental fights -- France, England, and Italy. (underlines are ours)

That is to say, in a series of countries where state capitalism rules in various degrees of development, that the workers "have taken power from the capitalists." In South America, where the proletariat is enmeshed in the anti-imperialist struggle into which its different national bourgeoisies have dragged it, "they are on the verge of following." And in another series of countries in Western Europe where these organizations (Communist Parties and Unions) are put up as a model, we see how one of the major obstacles for the workers are touted as the organizations "capable of defending the most elemental rights" . . . .

In this fashion, however much they scream about bureaucracy, conceiving it to be within the interests of the class to have a vote inside of organizations which have nothing to do with the class, understanding autonomy to mean the exclusion of political groups, WE CANNOT AVOID CONCLUDING THAT THEIR ANTI-BUREAUCRATIC COMMISSIONS ARE ALIKE AS TWO DROPS OF WATER TO THE COMMISSIONS OF THE PCE, PCI, OR BANDERA ROJA.

Starting from this basis -- as they say -- and drawing from the great experience of struggle in the factories, to say that in order to speak of socialism to the workers it is first necessary "to gain their confidence" (to live with them, to speak as they speak, etc.), to say that in principle the workers can only organize for economic struggle and to say that revolutionaries must base their organizational work in this type of struggle as a pre-condition towards stepping to a "higher level", and to misrepresent this whole process as a pure "pedagogical procedure" in order to follow the fundamental objective (the socialist revolution) assumes in practice the defense of the same positions as the Workers Commissions which they have accused of bureaucracy, is to act in the same manipulative and dictatorial manner as those they accuse of being "false leaders" and "foreign elements." It is nothing but a case of anti-bureaucratic bureaucracy.

We say to these militants engaged in the creation of new Workers Commissions:

Revolutionaries do not create beforehand organizations in which the proletariat is announced as the ruling class. It is the PRACTICE of the class itself through different stages of society which brings it to the consciousness of its economic and political interests. Its organization is inseparable from its consciousness. The task of revolutionaries consists of showing at any moment the



true meaning of the struggle and NEVER, neither for "educational" nor for "tactical" nor for any other reason can they hide the true meaning of the struggle from the class.

If the Workers Commissions today do not continue to take root, to enlist the majority of workers, to be definitive, unified, democratic, autonomous and representative organizations, it is not because determined groups full of bureaucrats are boycotting them. The explanations for its crisis must be found elsewhere. And it is in the maturation of the consciousness of the proletariat and in the assimilation of all the experience of the struggle on behalf of the Commissions where these explanations are to be found. Unionism, impossible reformism, bourgeois democracy, covenants, negotiations, forms of civic action . . . all these policies are profoundly foreign to the interests of the proletariat, all these indicate the explanations of its crisis and the existence of the bureaucracy within.

The bureaucrats are the product of the politics. To attribute the crisis of the Commissions to the bureaucrats without denouncing their counterrevolutionary politics is equivalent to defending the idea that by changing a few disloyal leaders and putting revolutionary ones in their place it is possible to change the whole organization and turn it back into a revolutionary one. But it is not the chiefs which make the organizations but the reverse.

#### Workers Commissions and the Defensive Struggle\*

At every level of the Workers Commissions, the "Local," the "Regional," or in the "Platforms," we find the same objective: the organization of the working class in a permanent manner for the defensive struggle, the formulation of more or less reformist "tactics."

In this way, the Workers Commissions having become the tireless loudspeakers for the defensive struggle are converted into the strongest brake upon the unification of the working class because the working class can only become united through the movement for the socialist revolution, that is to say, through the movement which breaks the chains which keep them bound up in tactical programs hiding their true revolutionary objectives.

Any permanent organization of the working class in the period of capitalist decadence can only exist on the basis of revolutionary socialism.

To construct as do the Workers Commissions permanent organizations of the class (which do not organize the majority of the class nor defend their interests) for the defense of the workers immediate interests in the style of the 19th century CAN ONLY LEAD TO INTEGRATION INTO THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM. Their role is none other than that of a labor union.

All the experience of unions IN THE ENTIRE WORLD shows that this type of organization can no longer play a revolutionary role but just the opposite. They can only play the role of serving as

\* We have used the words defensive struggle as a translation for the words "lucha reivindicativa." The dictionary meaning of the word reivindicativa is demand. A more literal translation for "lucha reivindicativa" is a struggle to achieve demands.



instruments of state capital to enlist and integrate the proletariat into the economic market of capitalism, that is to say, to help capitalism increase the exploitation of the working class. But decadent capitalism is incapable of providing real improvements.

In general all the defensive struggles (for better salaries, reduced working day, slower pace, etc.) lead to a confrontation with the state (occupation of factories, confrontation with the repressive forces of the State, jailing, etc.) that is to say, the majority of the defensive struggles TEND TO ASSUME A REVOLUTIONARY CHARACTER MORE QUICKLY EACH TIME.

The systematic actions of the Workers Commissions in this process is revelatory: constant negotiation with the boss, justification of confrontation with the State ONLY on the basis of its fascist character hiding that it is the BOURGEOISIE AS A CLASS WHICH EXPLOITS THE PROLETARIAT and not just the fascist wing . . . in short they act as a safety valve by which the revolutionary force is let out in each struggle, as little as possible, the main force finding no outlet.

In this way, cackling about the unity of the entire working class movement, they attempt to identify the organization of the Commissions with the organization of the class, and this with a "class wide labor union."

We can see what's said in the minutes of the first national Meeting of the Regional Workers Commissions:

With all its imperfections, pulled down by the multiple defects and above all, with the great difference between its real extent and the true organizational necessity of the working class, these new Commissions\* appear already as the embryos of the class-wide labor unions. And it is, not only because their most important political objective is the achievement of a union, but because they intend from now on to take on the appropriate tasks for a labor union: to obtain higher wages for the workers and better working conditions, to forge their unity, to foment the struggle for solidarity and for the generalization of the struggle and to enlist the whole mass of the workers behind clear political objectives. (on page 3 of the document cited)

This makes it perfectly clear that the defensive struggle for which they attempt to organize the working class does not express the necessity of a proletarian revolution but the necessity of obtaining the right to organize a "labor union."

In other words, they wish to say that in the long run, in order to achieve benefits it is necessary to depend on a union. Those that think thus must firmly believe in the progressive possibility of the capitalist system; for them to speak of decadence and the crisis must be a joke in bad taste: capitalism -- they would tell us if they are consistent -- is neither a world-wide social system, nor is it a brake on the development of the productive forces . . . !

\* This refers to the regional Workers Commissions as opposed to the locals of the old Commissions in which the PCE is predominate.



On the other hand, how can they pretend that a union would be the instrument for obtaining improvements of all types (primarily economic) from a system which in order to survive can offer nothing but continually increasing exploitation.

With regard to "the clear political objectives behind which they are attempting to enlist the entire working class," they define these as the struggle against the dictatorship and for bourgeois democracy which reduces to the "Bourgeois Democratic Republic."

This is the political clarity of the Regional Workers Commissions and of the Bandera Roja. We can do no less than congratulate them on their "clarity" and "coherence" in forgetting and pigeonholing the proletarian revolution. At least the working class and its militants harbor no illusions about the objectives of these organizations.

Faced with this definition of the defensive struggle which they identify with the union movement, we must confront the facts which obtain in the whole world and which show the revolutionary perspective:

Obviously the struggle for a "class-wide union" is a "defensive struggle," but the struggles which develop outside of and against the labor unions in the capitalist countries (where labor unions do exist) are also defensive. We refer concretely to those so-called "wildcats." In this case these economic struggles which are also defensive cannot in any way be identified with the union struggle. Today in the whole world and particularly in Europe, the working class struggle for its economic defense tends to develop each time with greater force outside of the unions.

And at the same time that this happens, we see how the unions (AND THE EXAMPLE OF PORTUGAL CONFIRMS THIS WITH GREAT CLARITY) are the first to demand of their respective governments the promulgation of laws against "wildcats," how they become at the same time the chief repressors of any struggle which they do not control: the general strike in May of 1968 in France was a clear example of the efficacy of the French CGT (the transmission belt of the French CP) in its task of liquidating that struggle. In Poland, the workers (Danzig 1970) were obliged to literally destroy their "workers Union."

When in Spain, the Workers Commissions declare that their primary objective is the establishment of a "union," in practice they subordinate the whole struggle to the achievement of this objective. In this way, under the slogan of "freedom to unionize" they intend to mystify the true content of the struggle. When the struggle overflows at one or another time the union intentions and shows its true revolutionary perspective, the Workers Commissions try to channel all the energy and revolutionary potential of the proletariat, diverting it into sterile and counter-revolutionary unionism. This is the true meaning of the slogan "for a class-wide union."

In another part of the document of the national meeting of the regional Workers Commissions, the reasons for the crisis of the Commissions is analyzed. Here are their arguments:

And it is not only a question of the existence of these organizations -- the Workers Commissions -- but also of their function, of their organizational criteria and their work, of their political objectives. Here in reality is



the heart of the problem.

We are doing nothing new in speaking of the Workers Commissions. Born, as is already known, in 1962, 10 years of experience has shown that these guiding principles which were accepted for a long time have not contributed in making the Workers Commissions truly united, truly developed, truly established. In many cases the opposite is true, these guiding principles (conceiving of the Commissions as a disorganized movement supported only by more or less prestigious leaders, forcing legality further than it could without committing its entire apparatus and its skeletal organization, transferring all responsibility for the leadership of the struggles to those of its militants who were holding union positions.) caused the Workers Commissions of various important industrial centers to lose their efficacy, to be victims of repression, incapacity and inoperation in the face of the growing necessities raised by the workers struggles . . . (the cited document page 2)

All these easily correctible "TRIFLES" (putting your own people in official positions, not engaging in legalisms, not leaving the management of the struggle in the hands of "prestigious" leaders or union officials) translates in practice into the manipulation of the struggles by substituting new leaders with more "prestige" (more credible to the workers) into the Factory Assemblies, by carrying out the struggles with regard to their legality, through pacts and negotiations, (trying always to respect legal labor regulations), and by channeling the struggles via the vertical Union.

For these trifles the local Commissions and the others, have boycotted the Macosa struggle and even more clearly the one at Harry Walker. In the former, one of the largest and toughest of the last years in Barcelona, because there they had no Commissions which interfered with the struggle, because there they had no union officials who could "direct" the struggle. It was the general Assembly of all the workers in the factory which directed their own struggle and kept them from letting themselves be so easily deceived.

The only observable fact, which despite their failure in popularizing the Commissions, in rooting them firmly in the factories, is that the struggle of the proletariat INSTEAD OF DIMINISHING IS CONSTANTLY GROWING (even without having organized and coordinated Commissions) and this should be enough to make them reflect on the truth of their politics, on which class interests they defend. Even more so when their fundamental task: the defensive struggle (for higher wages, shorter working day, slower work pace, etc.) is already in motion, spontaneously all the workers without a Commission have this to say "comrades to the struggle!"

But no, it is not a question of political objectives. It is only a question of easily correctible "DEFECTS," a stroke here and a stroke there and already we have some new little Commissions.

In this manner, the most self-denying supporters of the defensive struggle of the proletariat, those who most often lead it, are



converted into the most merciless executioners when the revolutionary character of the class is revealed. And this is not because of bad faith or bad will.

ANY UNION ORGANIZATION IS INEVITABLY CONDEMNED TO PLAY THIS ROLE IN THE PERIOD OF THE DECADENCE OF CAPITALISM.

What is our position in regard to the defensive struggle?

Since the proletariat exists as a class, that is to say, a collection of individuals which is economically determined by a common material condition, their revolutionary struggle inevitably takes on the character of a defensive struggle.

The history of the workers movement obstinately refuses to accept a separation between the defensive struggle and the revolutionary struggle.

Even though most of the struggles have not succeeded in passing beyond the PURELY DEFENSIVE stage and have not been able to be more than potentially revolutionary, there has never existed a revolutionary struggle which was not simultaneously defensive.

The revolutionary movement of 1917 in Russia is an extraordinarily eloquent example of what we say. The working class threw itself into revolutionary struggle pushed by economic misery and by the war. The movement became unified and strengthened through the struggle for a particular demand: PEACE.

The bourgeoisie was not able to accede to this demand and in order to obtain it the proletariat could only continue its fight to the end: THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BOURGEOIS STATE

What distinguished the most advanced faction of the proletariat, the Bolshevik party from the factions of the Russian bourgeoisie (Mensheviks and SRs) WAS NOT THE DEFENSE OF THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE AND AGAINST WAR, BUT THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE, THE TRUE REASON FOR THE RUSSIAN PROLETARIAT'S FIGHT: the proletarian revolution.

In the same manner, the response to the attack of July of 1936 in Spain against fascism never ceased to be potentially revolutionary. If it became the most tragic defeat it was because the left of capital (the communist parties headed by the CP of the Soviet Union) succeeded in mystifying, in limiting and in vitiating its revolutionary content, which was the true combatative spirit of the proletariat. The defeat of the spanish proletariat was the preparation for the massacre of the world proletariat: the second imperialist world war. The CAPITALIST crisis could be momentarily resolved through the imperialist war and the socialist revolution was deferred.

In Spain during the war of 1936, the revolutionary character of the struggle against fascism was expressed. The socialist and communist parties, the CNT and the POUM together with the bourgeois republicans and nationalists, succeeded in mystifying and enlisting the proletarian behind the bourgeois republic thereby defeating the revolution. October of 1934 in Asturias and May of 37 in Barcelona are clear examples of how the parties of capital disguised by the names of



"communist" and "socialist" are the executioners of the revolution.

Moreover they tell us, that we revolutionaries must provoke defensive struggles. To those who think this, we respond THAT THIS IS NOT OUR TASK.

THE DEFENSIVE STRUGGLE IS NOT SOME BRILLIANT INVENTION OF A FLY-BY-NIGHT REVOLUTIONARY, the struggle exists from the birth of the proletariat itself and so does its revolutionary potential.

In the ascendant phase of capitalism (when it was a social system capable of developing the productive forces up to unfathomed limits) capital had its moments of greatest wealth and development. It could grant reforms and real and lasting improvements to the working class in the economic domain (reduction of the working day, higher wages, etc.) as in the social aspects (freedom of assembly, the right to unionize, universal suffrage, etc.) without putting the economy in danger. There were new markets in the world to be conquered. The "revolutionary outbursts" of the defensive struggle marked this period.

In this phase, the working class was united through the Unions and the Parliamentary Parties, and developed its struggle without being driven into direct confrontations with the bourgeois State. Capital was sufficiently rich and the markets sufficiently numerous for the system to avoid danger by making those concessions which the working class obliged it to concede. Social revolution was not the order of the day.

When capital entered its decadent phase the struggles were with much greater speed and frequency transformed into revolutionary struggles because capital was not able to grant true reforms, because all concessions had been rapidly TAKEN BACK, because ONLY AT THE COST OF CONSTANT DETERIORATION OF THE LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS COULD CAPITAL DELAY THE INEVITABLE CRISIS.

What has changed in the phase of decadence of capitalism, is that the merely economic character of the defensive struggle diminishes each time they happen and THAT ITS TRUE NATURE AND ITS REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL GROW MORE RAPIDLY THAN IN THE PAST CENTURY.

But today as yesterday, the defensive struggle of the working class is not something invented by revolutionaries, no "miraculous tactic." Today as yesterday the revolutionary potential is bound up in the struggle.

And it is chiefly because the working class is beginning, after 50 years of counter-revolution, to understand the true meaning of the struggle, to reject at more and more often ON A WORLD SCALE the intentions of capital to limit and integrate it.

Today, the organizations which might have appeared ideally suited toward bringing the struggle to an end (unions, permanent organizations of the defensive struggle, etc.) are not only ABANDONED by the class but have BECOME INSTRUMENTS OF CAPITAL, the working class must fight against them and destroy them in order to further develop the struggle.

This is the lesson of the struggle of the polish working class, when,



in 1970 in the face of rising prices decided upon by the "socialist" government of Gomulka, it launched into combat confronting the government police the Polish CP and the unions. In this struggle they organized workers councils in the factories and fought wildcats against the unions. Only by the force of arms could the "Socialists" and the "Workers Unions" defeat the polish working class.

While the task of the agents of capital within the working class is to HIDE the revolutionary character of the working classes struggle, TO BRIDLE IT AND TO LINE IT UP behind the objectives of capital in order to rid it of its revolutionary potential, the task of revolutionaries is to show its true content at all times.

We do not come before the world as DOCTRINAIRES, armed with a new principle: Here is the truth, get down on your knees! . . . We do not say: Abandon your struggles because you are foolish! We only demonstrate the true reason for struggling; Consciousness is something you must come to whether you like it or not! (Karl Marx, Letter to Ruge)

THIS IS OUR OBJECTIVE, what distinguishes revolutionaries today is not their "popularity," their "capacity to attract the masses" or their capacity to "gain the confidence of bourgeois sectors."

As opposed to those who sell out the revolution and who are traitors to the proletariat and who defend the objectives of capital in order not "to lose contact with the working masses," revolutionaries know that showing the true objectives of the struggle will be often "unpopular," that they will be accused of being "left wing provocateurs" when the struggle falters, of being "disruptors of sacred unity," of being "agents of reaction" and they will even be accused of being collaborators of fascism when faced by popular democratic fronts they denounce all things of this sort as being the "fig leaves" of capital.

ACCION PROLETARIA

trans. by Y. Bumsczik

and

E. Mett

#### Abbreviations:

CNT -- Anarchist trade unions

UGT -- trade unions linked to the Socialist Party

PSOE -- Socialist Party

PCE -- Communist Party

CNS -- State controlled trade unions



## ANTI-FASCISM AGAINST THE WORKING CLASS

Faced with economic collapse the bourgeoisie can no longer pretend that there is no crisis. In the face of sky-rocketing trade and payments deficits, the bourgeoisie of each country must seek to make its national capital competitive on the world market again. Everywhere events impose one policy and only one policy on the bourgeoisie: draconian austerity programs. To make the national capital competitive, to take away markets from rivals, and to restore an adequate rate of profit for capital, requires drastic cuts in "social" spending (education, health care, public transportation, housing) and the installation of controls over wages. In addition to the galloping inflation which has already sharply eroded the standards of living of the working class, a spectre of sharply rising unemployment has been added. In recent weeks and months in the U.S. the government of President Ford has swung from urging tax surcharges to fight inflation to talk of tax cuts to fight recession and to increased talk of government subsidies for wages and government funded employment programs. In addition to the mighty auto industry, home construction and its associated appliance industries and even the city of New York are laying off large numbers of workers. The present unemployment rates surpass everything except the tail of the 1929 depression. By all forecasts these rates will get worse. There is growing concern about the reaction of the working class which was voiced by the New York Times on December 30, 1974 in a feature article titled "Detroit in Recession Reflects Fear and Strength:"

...it is being suggested that a more general revolutionary atmosphere might develop if the recession is too severe and too long. Expectations among workers have been heightened, it is said.... There is the precedent, and the legacy, of the student and black rebellions of the nineteen-sixties. People in general are more sophisticated and less docile than they were during the Depression. It is a major concern among Detroiters who think about such things.

Caught between "the devil and the deep blue sea," the bourgeoisie while accelerating its attack on the living standards of the working class is also desperately trying to avoid provoking resistance.

Although there is relative calm in the U.S., in other countries this conundrum is actively being faced. In Greece and Portugal, where the crisis has been the deepest, the bourgeoisie has already acted; in Denmark and Italy, which face national bankruptcy, the bourgeoisie is frantically preparing its attack on the working class. In Spain, Italy, and Britain, the tempo of the crisis leaves the bourgeoisie little room for manoeuvre; and the time for a concerted attack on the proletariat approaches. For the bourgeoisie what is necessary is -- to use the words of Costa-Gomes, the President installed by Portugal's democratic



junta -- "work, order, and unity!"

The necessity for imposing labor discipline is not a new problem. The bourgeoisie faced it in the 1920's and 1930's. The question now as then is which method should be used to impose these policies on the workers. Historically, the two basic alternatives are: (1) violence, the direct and brutal assault which is associated with fascism, or (2) making the workers believe that their interests and the interests of national capital are identical. -- the hallmark of democratic or left regimes. For this latter alternative, the participation of the capitalist organizations of workers -- unions and "workers" parties -- in the state apparatus is essential.

Whichever method is chosen is determined by the relative strength or weakness of the national capital on the world market and by the militancy or passivity of the working class. However, what formula of bourgeois rule is adopted -- democratic, talinist, fascist, social democratic -- the end result will be the same for the proletariat: austerity and labor discipline in the short run; ideological and physical mobilization for imperialist war in the not-so-long run. The similarity between what on the surface appear to be diametrically opposed regimes was brought out during an inquiry into the conduct of Leon Blum undertaken by a committee of the French national assembly shortly after World War II. In speaking of his popular front government of the '30's, Blum admitted that one of the objectives of his rearmament program had been to "provide" aid to the war industry by means similar to those that Dr. Schacht (the Nazi Minister for Economic Affairs) has utilized in Germany;" the rearmament plan was, according to Blum, similar to Stalin's 5 year plan and to the Goering plan in Nazi Germany.

We are not saying that the question of which formula the bourgeoisie will utilize in order to crush the proletariat and mobilize it for war, is a matter of indifference to marxists. Indeed we must ask if, under present conditions, in the capitalist metropolises, fascism is imminent. To this question our answer is an unequivocal NO.

Given the present balance of forces and the growing combativity of the working class, the bourgeoisie cannot now attack the workers directly. Historically fascism has never been used by the bourgeoisie to break a nascent and growing revolutionary workers' movement; it is the way in which -- under particular historical conditions -- the bourgeoisie imposes its austerity and war programs on a proletariat already DEFEATED AND FRAGMENTED BY THE LEFT. Thus in Germany the road to fascism was prepared by Noske, Ebert, and the Social Democrats who first diverted and then crushed the proletariat in 1919-1921. In Italy the upsurge



of the working class in 1920 was led into a dead end by the unions and the Socialist Party and then liquidated by the democratic Giolitti regime. In Spain in 1936 when the uprising of workers in the industrial centers indicated that the proletariat had not been sufficiently fragmented and made passive even by its bloody defeats at the hands of left governments (the latest of which had taken place in Asturias in 1934) a popular front government was necessary to completely shatter and crush the proletariat before France and the Falange could take over. This model is by no means confined to pre-WW II Europe. The recent example of Chile, where the road for the "fascist" Pinochet was cleared by Allende and the left, is a classic case. However, the fascist movements of the petty bourgeoisie -- which even today flourish in many countries -- can only come to power with the SUPPORT OF and under the CONTROL OF BIG CAPITAL. In Germany the efforts the big Ruhr industrialists like Kirdorf, Krupp, and Thyssen and bankers like Schacht and von Schroeder were instrumental in bringing Hitler to power, while in Italy the Confindustria (the General Federation of Industry) and leading financiers like Toeplitz of the Banca Commerciale prepared the way for Mussolini's March on Rome.

Today, however, big capital is anti-fascist. In order to control the working class, they need not opt for fascism as a solution. They can go the "opposite" way and be anti-fascist. This way they can hope to let the old World War II antagonisms work in their favor and more importantly can avoid an open confrontation with the working class. After all haven't they also heard of "recuperation" and "repressive tolerance." In Italy, for example, Giovanni Agnelli, the head of the Fiat empire and President of the Confindustria, whose grandfather was an ardent black shirt, today speaks of the need to bring the Communist party and the trade unions into the government. The Confindustria itself, which once so lavishly financed Mussolini, at its recent convention observed a minute of silence for the victims of the fascist bomb attack in Brescia and prepares news releases on the "glorious" record of leading industrialists like Agnelli and Cefis (the head of Montecatini-Edison) in the anti-fascist resistance during the last war. In Greece it was big capital which played a leading role in the overthrow of the fascist junta and in the establishment of the democratic Caramanlis regime.

A good example of where big capital stands today was given voice by the New York Times on January 5 in a editorial crowing with delight over the guilty verdict handed down by the jury in the recent trial of Haldeman, Mitchell, Erlichman, et al, in Judge Sirica's Federal District Court. In this editorial they mentioned judicial procedures yet to be done involving both shady campaign financing of Nixon and the Nixon government's "illegal use" of the CIA, FBI and horror of horrors the Internal Revenue Service:



Despite such unfinished business, last week's verdict cuts to the heart of an evil which transcends Watergate. The case that went to the jury told much of a corruption that had enveloped the control center of American government....

Now, the nation asks not for vengeance or judicial harshness. The need is rather to complete a coherent documentation of that pattern of subversion that placed democratic rule in jeopardy. It was a narrow escape. (our emphasis)

The lessons of the past are clear and unequivocal: to meet the threat of and to divert a combative proletariat A LEFT OR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IS NEEDED. In 1918 in their hour of peril it was to the Social Democrats that the German bourgeoisie turned. In the midst of the social upheavals which followed World War I in Italy, the bourgeoisie found refuge behind the left democratic regimes of Nitti and Giolitti. In 1936 in Spain it was to Negrin, Largo Caballero and a popular front of Socialists, Stalinists, anarchists and left republicans to whom the bourgeoisie turned when the situation momentarily got out of control.

In every capitalist crisis an important component of the mobilization of the workers behind the state is nationalism. Where at the present moment is this to come from? "Anti-Communism"? No! That old shibboleth has been abandoned by everyone except the most rabid of the right capitalists. Here the threat of lurking fascism just hits the spot. Everywhere the word "fascism" summons up fearsome images of cruelty and consummate evil: the only real tangible image of the devil remaining in this largely secular world. Anti-fascism then becomes one of the most important ideological weapons of the bourgeoisie. Already this ploy has been put to work. In Portugal it is in the name of preventing a fascist restoration that the junta, with its Socialist and Communist supporters, demands "work, order, and unity" from the proletariat. In Greece the spectre of a fascist counter-coup is used to extract sacrifices from the proletariat and as a cover for Caramanlis' austerity program. With respect to Italy, Agnelli and the Confindustria, as well as London's prestigious Financial Times, argue that the "historical compromise" proposed by the Stalinists may be the only alternative to a fascist coup. And lo and behold the "leftists," from the Maoists, Trotskyists and anarchists to the NCLC and Weathermen are all eager to be the most fervent anti-fascists of them all. In this, as in so many other ways, they perform an invaluable service for the bourgeoisie in its moment of need. Today the leftists, who so shrilly warn us of the fascist peril, are jockeying for a chance to become the Noske's, Ebert's, Negrin's and Caballero's of tomorrow.



One of these groups, the International Workers Party, itself a split from the NCLC, saw the delay in Rockefeller's nomination as a significant event for the working class. They responded with glee when the conservatives in Congress were joined by "youthful 'opportunistic liberals' (a redundancy!) who are turning the anti-corruption tide against the political leader of the liberal-fascist forces which have used the 'Watergate tactic' to take over key position in state, local and national government." (From an October issue of the International Worker.) Although in the same article they acknowledge that the delay and criticism of Rockefeller "will not in any sense mean a final victory for the working class," it would still constitute a major setback for the "fascist family" and "would buy much-needed time for the working class to organize." In their attempt to stop capitalism from turning fascist they are prepared to support and form popular fronts with any self proclaimed socialist parties. At the very least these groups provide an ideological cloak under which the official left -- Stalinists, social democrats, the unions -- can prepare to carry out a civil war against the proletariat.

In the epoch of capitalist decay, of permanent crisis and imperialist wars, there is no bourgeois form of government which which is better or worse for the proletariat, no lesser of two evils. There are only different forms of the dictatorship of capital which, depending on specific conditions, ARE BETTER SUITED TO THE NEEDS OF THE BOURGEOISIE. Support for one form of bourgeois rule over another is tantamount to support for capital in its effort to crush the proletariat and to organize a "national union" for waging imperialist war!

E. Mett and Mac Intosh



